

Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, and Students of
Bergen Community College
Paramus, NJ

By

An Evaluation Team representing the
Middle States Commission on Higher Education

Prepared after study of the institution's self-study report and a visit to the campus on
February 28-March 2, 2016

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AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

President

Dr. B. Kaye Walter

Chief Academic Officer

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Middle States Commission on Higher Education
Evaluation Visit, Bergen Community College, February 28-March 2, 2016
Visiting Team Report
March

I. Introduction

Bergen Community College was established in 1965 by the Bergen County Board of Chosen Freeholders. A comprehensive community college, Bergen enrolls nearly 16,000 students in its academic programs and another 7,500 students in its continuing education and adult programs. The College chose to prepare their decennial reaccreditation report through a comprehensive *Middle States Self Study*. Each of the 14 Middle States Standards of Excellence is addressed in one or more of the substantive chapters of the resulting document.

The Middle States visiting team read and analyzed each of the Standards and conducted a thorough review of each of them. Through team meetings, interviews on the campus, and analysis of exhibits and artifacts provided by the College, team members left their three-day college visit, (February 28-March 2, 2016) with complete confidence of the findings rendered later in this report.

The visiting team found a Board, President, and College community excited about the opportunity to participate in the self-study and viewed it as an opportunity for institutional renewal and growth. The visiting team was struck by the improvements made since the last Periodic Report (2011), particularly in Standard 14 addressing student learning outcomes. The visiting team was impressed with the College faculty selecting the LEAP criteria for assessing general education outcomes. Clearly the faculty have embraced the LEAP criteria and are broadly using it in general education learning outcomes assessment.

Led by a new President, Dr. Kaye Walter, keen attention has been paid to assessment, strategic planning, and improving the success of Bergen students. Additionally, a new campus resource, The Health Professions Teaching Center has been developed and will open in the late spring of 2016. Also of note, the College has been steadily adding to the resources, services, and programs provided to the campus location in the Meadowlands.

The College is to be commended for taking a more focused and institutional approach to student success. Notable accomplishments include the development of a One-Stop Student Support Center, piloting mandatory student orientation, implementing an early

alert system and revising the developmental math curriculum. Of particular significance is the College's application and acceptance into the Achieving the Dream (ATD) network.

II. Context and Nature of the Visit

➤ Institutional Overview

➤ Scope of the institution at the time of the evaluation

Bergen Community College is a public associate degree granting institution. The campus is sited in a suburban setting with a single campus. There are two additional sites, one in the Meadowlands and one in Hackensack. Bergen has been operating distance education courses, both on-line and hybrid for some time. In 2014, 19.9% of the students participated in on-line courses and 9.7 participated in the hybrid approach.

➤ Self-study process and report

The College chose to conduct a comprehensive report addressing all 14 Standards of Excellence. Teams were populated from across the campus employee groups and deployed to examine each standard. The self-study was led by a Steering Committee of faculty and staff, as well as a Board member. The Steering Committee was led by a faculty/administrator leadership team. The Self-Study design can be described as broadly inclusive and participatory.

III. Affirmation of Continued Compliance with Requirements of Affiliation

Based on a review of the self-study, interviews, the Certification Statement supplied by the institution and/or other documents, the team affirms that the institution continues to meet the Requirements of Affiliation in the Characteristics of Excellence.

IV. Compliance with Federal Requirements issues Relative to State Regulatory or Other Accrediting Agency Requirements

Based on the separate verification of compliance with accreditation-relevant provisions of the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 and, as necessary, review of the self-study, certification by the institution, other institutional documents, and/or interviews, the team affirms that the institution meets all relevant federal and state regulations and the requirements of the other Department of Education recognized accreditors.

Detailed reports of student complaints (academic and student affairs) from the Maxient system for the past five years (2011-2015) were reviewed by the team. The Maxient system is now used to enter and track student complaints from initiation to resolution.

V. Evaluation Overview

The visiting team interviewed the self-study teams, students, employees, faculty and staff, as well as Board members. The visiting team experienced the campus as informed about the self-study process and excited about the outcomes. In advance of the visit, the team reviewed each of the Standards presented by the Self-Study as well as supplemental information and exhibits that were shared with the visiting team by the College. The visiting team also examined extensively the College's website to glean additional information and context for the evaluation report.

VI. Compliance with Accreditation Standards

Standard 1: Mission and Goals

The institution's mission clearly defines its purpose within the context of higher education and indicates who the institution serves and what it intends to accomplish. The institution's stated goals, consistent with the aspirations and expectations of higher education, clearly specify how the institution will fulfill its mission. The mission and goals are developed and recognized by the institution with the participation of its members and its governing body and are used to develop and shape its programs and practices and to evaluate its effectiveness.

Overall Evaluation

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to the standard:

- The College recently (this past summer and fall) engaged in a review and revision of its vision, mission, and values statements. This was in response to the self-study working group's finding that the previous mission had been developed without broad input from all campus constituents. New statements were approved and adopted by the College Board of Trustees as of December 2015. All faculty and staff were invited to participate in the revision process through an e-mail newsletter to the campus community. The new statements appear to be widely published on the College's website, on brochures, and throughout campus.
- The current strategic plan (2013-2018) is based on the old mission. There is evidence that the development of the plan involved the entire campus community. Students, faculty, staff, administration, and board of trustee members were all part of the planning committee, and the college community was invited to give feedback via open forum and e-mail.
- The goals in the strategic plan are clearly defined and related to the old mission upon which they are based. Specific action items associated with each goal

delineate how the goals will be accomplished, and measurements are identified that will indicate how well each goal is being reached.

- The old mission clearly defines the College's purpose, whom it serves, and what it intends to accomplish. The new mission is inspirational, simple to remember, and appears to be embraced by the college community. However, due to its brevity, it is unclear how the new mission will be assessed or how it will be used to guide planning at the College.
- Program learning outcomes are clearly developed and stated, however they have not been mapped to the College's goals as outlined in the strategic plan.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices

- The College's new mission statement resulted from a collaborative exchange of ideas and sharing of information campus-wide. The process was transparent and inclusive of members across the campus community.

Suggestions

- Map program learning outcomes to the College's goals as outlined in the strategic plan.

Recommendations

- Identify metrics to assess achievement of the revised mission statement and use these metrics to integrate the mission statement into the College's planning.

Standard 2: Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal

An institution conducts ongoing planning and resource allocation based on its mission and goals, develops objectives to achieve them, and utilizes the results of its assessment activities for institutional renewal. Implementation and subsequent evaluation of the success of the strategic plan and resource allocation support the development and change necessary to improve and to maintain institutional quality.

Overall evaluation

In the team's judgment the institution appears to meet this standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

- The team reviewed the 2013-2018 Strategic Plan with its 14 goals and 48 action items which are organized around four strategic themes. This document along with a multitude of other planning documents, including but not limited to a Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) Plan, academic program reviews, a facilities master plan, business process reviews, and an information technology plan demonstrate a culture of continuous planning.
- The Strategic Plan was developed in a collaborative manner with a direct connection to the infrastructure and fiscal operations of Bergen Community College.

- The 2013-2018 Strategic Plan provides for strategic implementation of objectives and evaluation over five years for continued investments or needed change.
- The Strategic Enrollment Plan was developed when enrollment was near an all-time high and had developed metrics for 3% increases in most enrollment related metrics. Since 2011, enrollment has declined 15.6%. The institution is projecting incremental enrollment increases beginning in Fall 2016.
- In a relatively short period of time the budget development process has changed a number of times.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices

- Bergen's recent invitation to join the Achieving the Dream network demonstrates its commitment to continuous improvement and support of one of its four strategic themes, Student Success and Excellence.
- Many of the objectives contained within the SEM, facilities and information technology plan are regularly assessed and evidence achievement of outcomes through resource allocation.
- The Facilities Master Plan as its top priority identified improved or expanded academic/classrooms facilities. Bergen has received significant capital support from both the county and state which has allowed construction of a 62,000 square foot Health Professions Teaching Center which is scheduled to open Spring 2016.
- Continuous planning and assessment is widespread throughout the organization.
- 2013-2018 Strategic Plan included three additional "audacious goals," one which has been accomplished – becoming an Achieving the Dream College; and two others - obtaining branch campus status for Meadowlands and increasing graduation rates by 25% - are in process. Graduation rates have increased 13.9% in the past two years.
- Use of assessment fellows and evaluation rubrics in the meta-analysis process.
- A robust enrollment management planning committee with cross functional participation with regular assessment of outcomes.

Suggestions

- In conjunction with Bergen Community College's own self-assessment, the budget process has changed several times over the previous few years. The institution should assess the effectiveness of the new collaborative budget model and also conduct a comprehensive analysis of resource allocation and expenditures utilizing the Achieving the Dream's Institutional Capacity Framework.

Recommendations

- In conjunction with Bergen Community College's own self-assessment, a comprehensive process that increases curricular agility to respond quickly to evolving community needs should be undertaken. This assessment should be conducted in conjunction with assessing the financial viability of the 142 active degree and certificate offerings given the significant enrollment decline. According

to the 2014-15 Fact Book, there are a multitude of degree and certificate programs with an enrollment of less than ten students.

Standard 3: Institutional Resources

The human, financial, technical, facilities, and other resources necessary to achieve an institution's mission and goals are available and accessible. In the context of the institution's mission, the effective and efficient uses of the institution's resources are analyzed as part of ongoing outcomes assessment.

Overall evaluation

In the team's judgment the institution appears to meet this standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

- The essence of Standard 3 Institutional Resources provides that an accredited institution provides the necessary resources that allow it to achieve its mission and goals. Bergen Community College's operating and capital budgeting process is influenced by many factors – enrollment projections, tuition and fee policies, physical plant and technology needs, human capital and the corresponding fringe benefits and the accomplishment of the initiatives identified in the strategic focus areas. Although some key financial data was not provided as part of the self-study, subsequent review and discussion during the site visit demonstrated that Bergen fulfills the fundamental elements of the standard.
- Bergen undergoes an annual audit that has not included any management letter comments for the past two years.
- Given relatively flat financial support from the county and state and maintaining its strategic goal of minimal increases in student tuition, Bergen has done an admirable job maintaining its financial reserves.
- Although county funding has been relatively flat, Bergen Community College has received considerable capital and technology resources to fund strategic initiatives.
- Continued reliance on tuition and fees for approximately 70% of the unrestricted operating budget. With a strategic goal of minimal increases in student tuition rates combined with a significant decline in enrollment without major increases in county and/or state support, the College will continue to budget a financial deficit and must continue to take the necessary steps to be good fiscal stewards of the institutional resources.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices

- Significant number of grants have allowed Bergen Community College to implement several key strategic initiatives, especially in fulfilling key components of the institution's technology and Master Plan which support a learning environment conducive to student success.

- Demonstrated a renewed and significant investment in its human capital through increased professional development (financing the pursuit of doctoral degrees for 26 full and part time staff over five years, a Leadership Academy, a Management Boot Camp and tuition reimbursement for employees pursuing degrees in higher education).
- Bergen Community College has been successful in meeting one of its strategic goals of minimal annual tuition increases.
- Bergen Community College has demonstrated a strong commitment to pursuing and implementing cost savings opportunities throughout the institution.

Suggestions

- The institution may want to complete a robust multi-year budget projection that appropriately analyzes potential budget impacts of changes in enrollment patterns on tuition and fees, potential changes in state and county support and availability of unrestricted fund balances, and how the revenue budget supports planned expenditures and the accomplishment of strategic initiatives.
- In conjunction with Bergen Community College's own self-assessment, with shrinking enrollment, a strategic goal of minimal tuition increases and relatively flat state and county support, the institution needs to continue to explore alternate revenue sources in order to fulfill its strategic goals. Within this context, Bergen has done an admirable job garnering grant resources to accomplish many initiatives. However, grants by their very nature are one-time and those activities, if fulfilling an important initiative, have to be sustained within the operating budget.

Standard 4: Leadership and Governance

The institution's system of governance clearly defines the roles of institutional constituencies in policy development and decision-making. The governance structure includes an active governing body with sufficient autonomy to assure institutional integrity and to fulfill its responsibilities of policy and resource development, consistent with the mission of the institution.

Overall evaluation

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

- The eleven-member appointed Board of Trustees is responsible for the governance of the College and has delegated the role of management of the College to the President. The President, the administrative team and the members of the College governance process develop proposed policies to be considered by the Board. The President carries out the policies once the board adopts them. New Board members are introduced to the College by an informal orientation program that includes a tour of the College by current board members. The connection of the board

members to the community is evidenced by their service as liaisons to various community entities, including the Bergen County Board of Freeholders, the New Jersey Council of County Colleges and the Board of School Estimate. The board members are expected to adhere to a code of conduct, just as all members of the organization must.

- The Bergen Community College Foundation mission supports not only scholarships, but also all other unmet needs of the College, including providing support for special projects, professional development for faculty and staff, and construction projects on campus. In addition, there is collaboration by the Board of Trustees and the Foundation Board on activities and fundraising that advances the mission of the College. Two members of the Board of Trustees serve on the Foundation Board.
- Of critical significance in establishing a more holistic and systemic governance framework are the creation of the Staff Senate and the creation of the College Council (a council that reports to the President of the College and represents the interests of all faculty, staff, administrators and students to the senior leader of the institution and the Board.) This governing body is still in the formative stage of its existence and is in the process of developing those documents that provide for collegial governance. The council possesses the ability to be broadly representative and it has clear outlines of responsibility and who may be selected to represent interests on the council. Faculty and students rightly occupy center stage in defining the *raison d'être* and implementation of any college's existence and mission. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of that dialogical relationship between faculty and students sustains its exertions with the essential and often invisible work of support staff, ranging from administrative assistants to directors, to counselors, to administrators. Thus, the Staff Senate provides a critical, if innovative, voice to the governance dialogue that sustains Bergen's effective exercise of its mission. For its own part, the College Council, as a representative group of a broad range of constituencies throughout the College, provides a capacious perspective on issues and considered analyses of these issues that challenge the College to remain consistent with, while ever-new in, its exercise of the College's mission. In addition, an orientation to the body and its role in the governance structure of the college will assist new members to further the purpose of the Council.
- Of no less import for the effective and efficient governance of the College is the re-alignment occurring within the Faculty Senate. It would appear that the College has made some good decisions in re-designing the number of and component elements of various academic departments, which may well lead to a more effective use of time in the Faculty Senate.
- While the College has clearly made important strides in addressing the last decennial visit's concerns about the breadth of collaboration within the shared governance system of the College, one wonders if the development of instruments to assess the effectiveness of these innovations will tell if there is perhaps a certain redundancy in the various advisory groups to the President. Of course, effective and concise communication among constituencies is the oxygen vitalizing healthy shared governance. The imminent establishment of multiple measures for assessing the

effectiveness of, membership on, and inter-relationship of these various advisory groups will determine, hopefully, a clear understanding of how best everyone's voice in the College can clarify a holistic and dynamic exercise of the College's mission. Also, an orientation to the body and its role in the governance structure of the College will assist new members to further the purpose of the Council. An orientation to shared governance may help new members to understand their role in the governance structure when they first join the Council.

- After a period of successive changes and a recent reorganization, the Middle States visiting team commends Bergen Community College for its efforts to establish a recently adopted Strategic Plan called "Framework for the Future: Maximizing Potential for Student Success" for codifying roles and responsibilities within the governance structures of Bergen Community College. This development is particularly noteworthy given the notice articulated by Middle States in the last decennial visit to Bergen Community College regarding its governance structures. As the self-study report notes, and the visiting team strongly supports, "Processes to evaluate the effectiveness of this framework...need to be developed and implemented".

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices

- The broader establishment of advisory and governance committees to assimilate the voice and perspectives of the various constituencies that animate the College's service to the students.
- The establishment of the Bergen Community College Leadership Academy, provides a means for cultivating leadership skills among incumbent employees at the College as well as for strengthening succession planning.
- The College is to be commended for providing the opportunity for the College to welcome its first cohort of 26 doctoral students, made up of Bergen Community College employees, and who are working on a doctorate in a nationally recognized Community College Leadership program. This program has the potential to ground the faculty, staff and administrators in the research and best practices in community college education and that will contribute to the College meeting its goals outline in the Strategic Plan. It is a fantastic growth opportunity for the participants.

Suggestions

- The College should continue to support and enhance the role of the nascent College Council and the College Council is encouraged to complete its organizing tasks. The Council Members advised the team about the charge that was given to them by the President when the body was formed, but they have not created a mission or purpose to guide their work beyond that charge. Nor have they created a way to assess their performance in relationship to that mission or purpose. The team suggests that once a mission or purpose is designed, that the College Council should finish the development of its constitution and bylaws as soon as possible. An orientation to shared governance may help new members to understand their role in the governance structure when they first join the Council.

- The imminent design and implementation of multiple measures for assessing the effectiveness of the College’s newly designed and enhanced governance system should ensure that the College Council meets its mission as outlined in its Constitution.
- The Board of Trustees has a well-established informal Board orientation program for new board members. However, the landscape for the Board’s role in governing an institution of higher education requires that the board receive a deep understanding of their role in policy development, finance and budgeting, evaluation of the president, academic affairs and student success as soon as they become members of the board. We suggest that the board develop a formal board orientation that includes assessment of that orientation. Given that much of the College is involved in assessment, we also suggest that the board adopt an assessment process for itself.

Standard 5: Administration

The institution’s administrative structure and services facilitate learning and research/scholarship, foster quality improvement, and support the institution’s organization and governance.

Overall evaluation

In the team’s judgment, the institution meets this standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

- The self-study describes the pro-active and wide-ranging efforts of the President to enhance the College governance system, as well as to streamline the administrative structures and planning of the College to respond more robustly to students’ needs. From the President to the administrators, the College requires appropriate levels of education and experience for all the positions. In addition, there is an ongoing assessment of positions as they become vacant in order to ensure that the positions are still necessary to advance the mission and strategic initiatives of the College. The College’s anti-discrimination statement might be included on all position descriptions to ensure that all job candidates and newcomers to the College are made aware of the values of the institution regarding discriminatory acts. Performance evaluations take place for all classes of employees in the College.
- The President’s encouragement that the College engage with Achieving the Dream positions the College well to respond to lesser-prepared students, as it also helps to support a stronger culture of assessment and continuous improvement.
- The self-study reports on the effective collaboration of Student Affairs and Academic Affairs in affecting a number of substantive changes, including “intrusive advising” and mandatory New Student Orientation. Additionally, the self-study notes the effective collaboration of the Faculty Senate and the Bergen Community College Faculty Association in streamlining the organization of the academic departments

- into seemingly more manageable and fewer number of units. The visiting team encourages the Faculty Senate to maintain its momentum in realizing the consequent changes in its own organization as a result of these newly aligned academic departments. The Faculty Senate might also consider examining, if it hasn't already, the utility of exploring further reorganization of the academic departments to facilitate greater collaboration with non-credit units of the College, as well.
- Finally, it is important and commendable to read that significant resources support the assessment of the Administrative and Educational Support (AES) units. Additionally, it is also good to see that multiple measures constitute a comprehensive approach to assessing administrative services, especially the “roll-out of the business process review of major AED functions.” The visiting team would expect that concomitant with this level of support for assessing administrative services, that there is adequate professional development for all of these employees, both in articulating assessable outcomes for their respective unit as well as in the creation of relevant rubrics or other instruments for assessing their effectiveness. Further, the visiting team hopes that these assessment strategies are sustainable as well as productive of further efficiencies and innovations in serving the students' needs.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices

- The collaboration between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs, as well as between the Faculty Senate and the Bergen Community College Faculty Association, establishes a strong precedent for further assessment of and innovation in the integrated and holistic approach to serving students.
- The College is to be commended for joining the Achieving the Dream network in support of its lesser-prepared students and also as a way of strengthening its culture of assessment and continuous improvement.
- The College has adopted an “intrusive advising” model as well as mandatory new student orientation. Both practices have very strong support as best practices based on national research and data.

Suggestions

- The College has stated in the self-study that an anti-discrimination statement should be included in every job description. Such an effort will reinforce the College's commitment to be a community that is free from bias and discrimination to its employees and job applicants.
- The College should continue to assess routinely the effectiveness of the organization of academic departments, especially with an eye to greater collaboration with non-credit units in the College.

Standard 6: Integrity

In the conduct of its programs and activity involving the public and the constituencies it serves, the institution demonstrates adherence to ethical standards and its own stated policies, providing support for academic and intellectual freedom.

Overall Evaluation

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to the standard:

- There is evidence of many programs to foster respect and tolerance on campus, including workshops, presentations, and training programs for faculty and staff. The newly established Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) coordinates these efforts.
- All employees have signed an Employee Code of Conduct, which was adopted in 2014.
- The student handbook clearly outlines the Student Code of Conduct as well as detailed procedures for those accused of violating college policies. The handbook is available online, however it is difficult to find.
- Human resources is responsible for ensuring that hiring, evaluation, and termination processes are in compliance with federal and state anti-discrimination regulations, all of which can be found online (though some with difficulty). Faculty grievance procedures are outlined in the faculty contract, but could not be found elsewhere.
- The faculty contract and the faculty handbook both clearly outline the policy on academic freedom.
- Procedures for reappointment, tenure, and promotion are outlined in the faculty contract. During the previous self-study, procedures for awarding faculty sabbaticals and promotions were perceived as inconsistent. As a result, tenure and promotional procedures have been revised. The new tenure procedure assigns junior faculty peer mentors and requires them to complete a classroom action research project. The new promotional procedure utilizes a rubric to add objectivity to the portfolio evaluation process. Faculty report that the rubric also helps them in the creation of their portfolios.
- Students are kept informed of program requirements and their progress towards degree through the College Catalog, Web Advisor (an online academic planning and advising tool), and the Academic Advising Center. Efforts are made (summer classes, winter term, running low enrollment classes, substitution of courses for requirements) to assure that students have sufficient opportunity to take the classes needed for their degrees.
- Assessment results, accreditation statements, and college statistics are widely available online to prospective students.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices

- An employee code of conduct was instituted in 2014, and has been signed by all employees.
- The new tenure and promotional procedures add clarity, meaning, and objectivity to these processes.

Recommendations

- Affirm the Self Study's recommendation to consolidate information and make policies and procedures easier to find on the College's website.

Standard 7: Institutional Assessment

Overall evaluation

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

Since BCC's "warning" based on its 2011 PRR, the College has made significant and highly commendable progress towards assessing and documenting student learning. The use of assessment results to support student success and completion reflect this progress, as enumerated in the section on institutional assessment.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices

- The College is commended for the number of professional development opportunities that support faculty in their assessment responsibilities, especially in regard to the development of assignments to "promote integrated learning skills and...analytical thinking". The College's development of internal accountability through meta-analysis of assessment reports is further evidence of the College's commendable improvements since the 2011 PRR.
- The Outcomes Assessment Handbook provides clear and useful guidance across the spectrum of assessment practices.
- The College has strengthened its assessment programs through the creation of a vice president's position for institutional effectiveness, as well as increasing the number of assessment fellows.
- The Faculty Senate has created the Learning Assessment Committee (LAC), which also provides a fine forum for intra-college communication regarding assessment issues.
- Continuing Education has a nascent assessment program, but the Health Professional Opportunity Grant is providing a strong model for expanding assessment of all programming in Continuing Education.

- All AES units have a two year cycle for assessing their unit goals. The Tutoring Center, Admissions, and Financial Aid are exemplary in their use of assessment data in exercising continuous improvement.
- Professional Development activities for faculty and staff have provided strong support for a growing culture of assessment and continuous improvement (94).
- The meta-analysis report has provided faculty and staff with strong support and good examples of effective assessment analysis.
- Achieving the Dream and G2C are excellent new programs that will reinforce the growing practice of assessment and continuous improvement.

Suggestions

- The College might consider the use of peer mentoring to support those faculty and staff with less experience in assessment.
- The College should consider how to afford the members of AES more time for their assessment activities, analogous to the support that faculty receive in their assessment practices.
- The College should consider how better to integrate assessment results and the maintenance of the curriculum.

Recommendations

- The College should consider the efficacy of the two year assessment cycle, especially in the context of academic program review, where it is out of sync with the program reviews.

Standard 8: Student Admissions and Retention

The Institution seeks to admit students whose interests, goals, and abilities are congruent with its mission and seeks to retain them through the pursuit of the students' educational goals.

Overall Evaluation

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings

Clearly articulated admissions policy and criteria that align with the College's mission statement are available for students to follow when accessing their educational goals. The self-study contains many documents that support their mission as an accessible, affordable and high-quality institution.

- Prospective students can learn about the institution through their admissions webpage, view book, academic catalog, social media, student handbook, open houses and in-person orientations. Different student groups such as incoming, continuing, transfer, non-degree and adult students are able to access relevant

information needed to inform their admissions experience at BCC. The College also provides multiple pathways to high school students through their College Experience Program, the Bergen Prep Program and the Summer Intensive Program.

- Programs and services to ensure that admitted students who marginally meet or do not meet the institution's qualifications are able to achieve expected learning goals through the Academic Intervention and Monitoring System (AIMS) program, Tutoring, Math Hub and the Student Success 101 class.
- Accurate and comprehensive information regarding academic programs to include testing information is available through the College Catalog and website. All first-time students are required to take the Accuplacer Basic Skills Placement test before registering for courses to determine student's appropriate placement in English and Math.
- The One-Stop Center allows for more efficient services with regard to Registration, Financial Aid and the Bursar Office. Also, the Q-Nomy digital queuing system appears to allow for more efficient customer service operations in terms of dealing with the flow of incoming BCC students.
- BCC provides appropriate and comprehensive information regarding financial aid, scholarships, grants, loans and refunds through its website, pamphlets and the BCC student handbook. Other support services programs are also available as a resource to supplement financial resources.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices

- Implementation of the One Stop Center and Q-Nomy digital queuing system to increase student access and efficiency in terms of service.
- Practice tests are provided to students who want to take the Accuplacer exams. Also, tutoring is provided for students who do not do well on the Accuplacer exams in order to increase placement out of developmental courses.
- BCC discontinuation of late registration conforms to best practice and is to be commended.
- Project Graduation and its work in identifying students to help increase completion rates.

Suggestions

- BCC should list the available scholarships that students can review on their website but produce language to let the applicants know that the Foundation would automatically administer and match scholarship with eligible recipients to ensure a higher award rate.

Recommendations

- The Team affirms the institution's recommendation to fully implement mandatory New Student Orientation and Advisement (with registration restrictions). In addition, the institution should also consider implementing a mandatory Student

Success Course for all incoming developmental students to help increase student success rates.

Standard 9: Student Support Services

The institution provides student support services reasonably necessary to enable each student to achieve the institution's goals for students.

Overall Evaluation

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings

Consistent with institutional mission, BCC appears to provide support services to meet the diverse needs of its population.

- An array of support services exist to meet the needs of students at access points (One Stop Center, Admissions, Registration, Bursar, Financial Aid, Testing etc.), academic and student support services (tutoring, center for health, wellness and personal counseling, advising, career and workforce center, transfer services, behavioral intervention teams, 123 Connect program, Academic Intervention and Monitoring System, Sidney Silverman Library); Student Engagement (Office of Student Life, Athletics, Mandatory New Student Orientation) as well as support services targeting special groups (Office of Specialized Services, Turning Point, Educational Opportunity Fund), veteran affairs and the child development center provides a spectrum of services in terms of meeting diverse needs of the Bergen student population.
- Qualified professionals are available to provide appropriate support services.
- Academic advisement takes place in the student success center. It appears to be a shared responsibility between academic affairs and student affairs. The academic advisement manual outlines the policy and procedures.
- Athletics is regulated by the same academic, fiscal and administrative policies that govern other institutional programs.
- Clearly documented procedures through the student handbook, the student code of conduct and the academic catalog are available for students, ensuring they know their rights and responsibilities when it comes to addressing complaints and grievances. Also, student complaints and grievances are tracked through the Maxient system from initiation to resolution.
- There was an information security officer position created to help safeguard the maintenance of student records and develop guidelines to prevent data breaches. In addition, the FERPA policy is available on the Bergen website with a waiver form available to students in the Office of Student Life and Judicial Affairs.
- Ongoing assessment that includes data from CCSSE and internal data from The Office of Institutional Research, such as the Graduate Transfer Experience, the

Perception of Graduates Report, and the Stop Out Survey, are examples of instruments used to track and assess the Bergen Student Experience. The One Stop Center serves as an example of streamlining and enhancing the student admission, registration, financial and payment experience.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices

- The Cerullo Learning Center serves as an exemplary Tutoring Center because of its work in helping BCC students obtain higher GPAs, higher cumulative GPAs as well as higher retention and graduation rates.

Recommendations

- The Team affirms the institution's recommendation to develop a system to ensure that student support services information populated throughout Bergen's website is up to date and its effectiveness is periodically assessed.

Standard 10: Faculty

The institution's instructional, research and service programs are devised, developed monitored and supported by qualified professionals.

Overall Evaluation

In the judgment of the members of the team, the institution appears to meet this standard.

Summary of the Evidence and Findings

- Since the last decennial visit, Bergen Community College has enacted a number of fine innovations and best practices among its faculty. The establishment of a Teaching Credentials Manual provides a very useful guide to deans and others involved in the hiring process. Professional development options for adjunct faculty, and the attendant compensation, are a fine support for a segment of the Academy's professoriate that often lacks critical support. In addition to the online student evaluations, the faculty exercise one of, if not the most effective means of evaluation: peer evaluation. Further, the revisions of the re-appointment and tenure process are to be commended and encouraged in their progress. Of particular note is the inclusion in the newly revised tenure process of including a research component. Faculty currency in their field through ongoing professional development and research enriches the endowment that funds student learning.
- Faculty governance and support for students beyond the curriculum itself also appears to have a healthy prominence in the faculty's presence to students. The Faculty Senate appears to have a robust though not excessive number of committees to conduct ordinary faculty governance business. The recent adoption of a limited pilot of "major-based advising" by faculty is a strong approach to student advising and student persistence and retention; it appears to complement

the “intrusive advising” model of advising referred to in Standard 5. Furthermore, it is encouraging to see that the faculty have engaged in significant analysis of the developmental education program; the visiting team encourages the faculty to continue to assess this program closely and routinely, employing a number of multiple measures and perspectives (longitudinal, among them) in addressing the needs of this most at-risk population of students.

- The College does well to support the Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning (CITL); professional development for faculty in terms of online learning is critical in today’s emerging new world of pervasive online modalities for the transmission of knowledge.
- As the Self Study notes, the College has identified a need to create opportunities to hire more diverse faculty that reflects more closely the diversity of its student body. The visiting team supports the adoption of procedures that helps the College meet that goal.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices

- The College provides critical professional, academic, and collegial support to its faculty. It is notable that the College has instituted a revised tenure process that is innovative and focused on teaching and learning. The action research component of the tenure process, completed by the candidate with the consultation of a faculty mentor and a dean, demonstrates a commendable institutional and faculty commitment to research and scholarship that is designed to improve teaching.
- The College, through its revisions of various curricular and personnel practices and policies, is working to create a faculty reflective of the emerging new world in higher education and thus, more responsive to students’ needs.

Suggestions

- Complete the revision of the curriculum handbook to standardize all processes and provide clear and definitive guidelines.
- There is a perception expressed in the self-study that the College is in need of more leadership, assessment and presence for professional development activities. The team suggests that may help to better facilitate an ambitious agenda of professional activities for all employee groups if the College pursues assigning that leadership and presence to someone.

Recommendations

- The team supports the recommendation of the self-study to enhance the role of Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning for professional development in teaching, and assessment of student learning will ensure that all of the efforts regarding faculty development are centralized, accessible, and cohesive.
- The team supports the recommendation of the Self Study to implement procedures that will support the recruitment of minority faculty and staff to better reflect the College’s student Body.

Standard 11: Educational Offerings

The institution's educational offerings display academic content, rigor, and coherence appropriate to its higher education mission. The institution identifies student learning goals and objectives, including knowledge and skills, for its educational offerings.

Overall evaluation

In the Team's judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to the standard:

- The College offers 142 degree and certificate programs. The broad range of educational offerings meets the needs of Bergen County and are offered in a variety of formats, traditional on-campus, online, hybrid, and in a variety of scheduling, day, evening, and weekend at both locations. The array of modalities and schedules are implemented without compromising academic content and rigor.
- The institution's educational offerings display academic content, rigor, and coherence that are appropriate to its higher education mission. Faculty and administration work collaboratively, via the Curriculum, Learning Assessment, and General Education Committees, to provide oversight of academic programs and assessment. The institution identifies student learning goals and objectives, including knowledge and skills, for its educational offerings and publishes them in both program and course descriptions in the Academic Catalog and via the College's Web site.
- Of the 142 degrees and certificate programs offered, 45% of students are enrolled in 5 majors. Coupled with the steady enrollment decline that began in 2012, the College has identified the need to establish a process to examine the number of degree and certificate program offerings required to support students and the mission of the College. As part of the program review process, departments identify academic programs for discontinuation, if deemed appropriate.
- The College has done a great deal of work to identify stackable programs that create additional pathways to academic certificate and degree programs for noncredit students. Once enrolled, noncredit students are advised of the follow-on credit program opportunities, however, these opportunities are not widely publicized to students prior to enrollment.
- The College offers numerous curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular opportunities, as well as extensive learning resources and library collection to support student learning. The library staff offers a wide array of instructional workshops as well as student support via email, instant message, phone and walk-in.

- Information literacy and technological skills are fostered across the curriculum through instructional programs supported by the library staff and integrated into course outcomes by teaching faculty.
- Transfer of science and mathematics courses to four-year institutions is a concern and is being addressed by the vice president of academic affairs and transfer counselors. Thirty-one percent of the students had one or more math or science courses rejected for transfer credit. To increase transferability of credits, the institution has implemented additional advising support to encourage students to complete math and science course sequences before transfer and has begun to coordinate with four-year partners on course articulation.
- Appropriate measures of student achievement of key learning outcomes have been identified, and results of assessment from program reviews and CCSSE are being used.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices

- The College is to be commended for providing students with web access to all course syllabi containing student learning outcomes via Syllabi Central.
- Annually, CIE Assessment Fellows and the Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness conduct holistic meta-analysis of outcomes assessment activities resulting in consistent quality of assessment activities and reports.
- The College is to be commended for providing various academic tutoring and academic support services at the nationally recognized Cerullo Learning Assistance Center.
- The College is to be commended for identifying multiple stackable programs that allow seamless transition from noncredit to credit programs.

Suggestions

- The College is encouraged to advertise and promote stackable program opportunities to students via the website, catalog, and other program materials.
- The Team affirms the suggestion in the self-study: “The College should critically analyze the viability of programs and move forward to a more directed academic pathways.”

Recommendations

- The Team supports the recommendation in the self-study: “Explore further which courses do not regularly transfer to four-year universities and make necessary adjustments to increase transferability.”

Standard 12: General Education

The institution’s curricula are designed so that students acquire and demonstrate college-level proficiency in general education and essential skills, including at least oral

and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, and technological competency.

Overall evaluation

In the Team's judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to the standard:

- The College provides a comprehensive program of general education consistent with the standards of New Jersey Council of Community Colleges (NJCCC). The College offers 183 General Education courses accounting for between 21 and 47 credits toward the associate degree.
- The College has defined general education, established criteria, and developed a seven-step process to ensure compliance with all areas of the approval process.
- A General Education Committee, a subcommittee of the Faculty Senate, is responsible for oversight and approval of general education courses and requirements.
- The College has identified eight categories of general education requirements: communication, computer science, humanities, technological competency, mathematics, natural sciences, social sciences, and diversity. The general education course competencies vary based on degree program. The College has defined between four and six general education course competencies based on the program.
- To support the College's mission to foster civility and respect, the College recently added a diversity requirement for AA degree students increasing the AA general education course competencies to six.
- The College has articulated clear criteria for general education courses in the 14 Characteristics of a General Education Course document. The Standards for General Education Course document guides development of new general education course offerings, and a seven-step process for general education course approval includes approval by the Curriculum Committee, Faculty Senate, College President, and Board of Trustees.
- CCSSE data suggest that students are often confused about general education requirements and its connections to their majors. A review of the General Education course guide and program curriculum requirements outlined in the Academic Catalog indicate a source of confusion.
- In Spring 2013, the College adopted the AAC&U Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) program, a rigorous general education review process consistent with Middle States guidelines. This is a college-wide, faculty-driven assessment process.

- Assessment of student learning outcomes associated with General Education courses is assigned to the General Education Committee under the oversight of the VP for CIE.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices

- The College is to be commended for adopting the nationally recognized LEAP program outcomes for general education assessment.
- The College is to be commended for engaging in a rigorous General Education review and approval process.

Suggestions

- The institution would benefit from an evaluation of the number of general education course offerings and consider streamlining the general education course options to reduce confusion for students.
- In addition to enhancing advising and online registration processes, develop a review process to assure general education information published in the Academic Catalog and website is clearly stated from the student’s perspective.
- The College should continue to review and evaluate the General Education process for sustainability.

Recommendations

- The visiting team supports the self-study recommendation to mandate that all course syllabi state the general education goals they meet.

Standard 13: Related Educational Activities

The institution’s programs or activities that are characterized by particular content, focus, location, mode of delivery, or sponsorship meet appropriate standards.

Overall evaluation

In the Team’s judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to the standard:

- Bergen Community College’s related educational activities include basic skills and ESL, certificate programs, experiential learning opportunities, noncredit offerings in the community and corporate education, an additional location, distance education, and contractual relationships.

- **Basic Skills (Developmental Studies)**

Recent data suggests that approximately 86% of incoming students require at least one developmental course. The College provides sufficient developmental courses as part of its educational offerings. Supporting documents and interviews provide evidence that the College employs a comprehensive testing and placement process to identify students who are under-prepared for college-level courses. Interviews with developmental math and English faculty reveal strong faculty commitment to student success. The various high-impact programs implemented to support student success in developmental courses support the commitment to developmental student success. The Success 101 course, Academic Intervention and Monitoring System (AIMS) program, and the 1-2-3 Connect programs provide specific support services to help at-risk students succeed.

The American Language Program (ALP) has made a positive impact on student success in the college-level English Composition course; ALP students demonstrate higher pass rates than non-ALP peers. Conversely, students enrolled in Developmental Math courses did not demonstrate higher pass rates in college level math. To address this issue, the College established a new developmental math course sequence which requires students to complete a developmental math course specific to their program of study.

- **Certificate Programs**

The College offers an array of certificate programs that prepare students for the workplace. The self-study and supporting documentation indicate that these certificate programs have clearly articulated program goals and student learning outcomes. There is evidence that certificate program courses are similar in rigor and content to the degree program courses from which they derive. Stackable pathway exists for those certificate programs that align with degree programs.

- **Experiential Learning**

The Board of Trustees approved the Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) policy on November 2, 2015. The Continuing Education portfolio development course will guide students through the portfolio development process. Students will use the Syllabi Central website to determine course learning outcomes to address in the portfolio. Student portfolios will be evaluated by the faculty subject matter expert. The College is diligently working to finalize implementation procedures for the PLA program in preparation for offering the first PLA course in the near future.

- **Non-credit offerings**

The College's Division of Continuing Education, Corporate and Public Sector Training offers a wide variety of courses and programs to respond to the workforce and lifelong learning needs of residents in the local community.

Supporting documents indicate that the non-credit course and program offerings are designed, approved, administered and periodically evaluated under established institutional procedures. Some non-credit programs currently transfer to credit degree programs. The College is evaluating opportunities for non-credit healthcare program and information technology transfer to credit certificate and degree programs. Continuing Education assessment activities are focused on assessment associated with third-party certification requirements.

- **Additional Locations**

The College operates two additional locations, the Philip J. Ciarco Jr Learning Center and the Bergen Community College at the Meadowlands. Ciarco serves adult education programs and the Meadowlands location serves residents and economic development initiatives in the southern part of the county. The College made significant investment in the renovation of the Meadowlands location in 2014. Currently, 16 degree programs can be completed at the Meadowlands location and course offerings and services are continually growing.

- **Distance Learning (Online Learning)**

Online and hybrid course opportunities are available to Bergen Community College students. The College offers over 300 online and hybrid courses and 12 degrees that can be completed fully online. The self-study, supporting documents, and on-site interviews indicate that these courses are consistent with the College's mission and goals, and they parallel in content and academic rigor traditional course offerings. The College has experienced steady and consistent growth in the online and hybrid programs since 2011, with the largest growth in hybrid course offerings. In 2014, 19.9% and 9.7% of students participated in online and hybrid courses, respectively.

The distance education program is supported by the Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning. The Online Professor Program (TOPP) is required for all faculty new to online teaching; however, the program has not been evaluated to determine impact on online teaching and learning. The steps taken to ensure the consistency and quality of online courses, albeit voluntary, are documented and include an industry standard practice, Quality Matters.

- **Contractual Relationships and Affiliate Providers**

Evidence indicates that the College's contractual agreements with other institutions and affiliate providers uphold the integrity of the College.

Significant Accomplishments

- The College is commended for its revisions of the developmental math sequence as a method to accelerate completion and to improve student success.

- The College is to be commended for providing ongoing training for faculty who teach online and hybrid courses.
- The College is to be commended for providing various academic support services for at-risk students.
- The College steadily added to the resources, services, and programs provided to the campus location in the Meadowlands.

Suggestions

- Establish an automated process within the student registration system to ensure developmental math courses are taken by the sixteenth credit for those students requiring developmental math courses.
- Advertise and promote pathway opportunities between certificate and degree programs so that students are aware of these options.
- Continue to evaluate and communicate pathways between non-credit and credit programs.
- Establish a workshop for faculty designated to evaluate PLA portfolio submissions.
- Expand Continuing Education assessment to all noncredit programming, using the Health Professional Opportunity Grant assessment as a model.
- Incorporate TOPP program as a component of the CITL assessment.

Recommendations

The Team affirms the recommendations in the self-study:

- Continue to collect data to determine if the new developmental math sequence improves student success in college-level math courses.
- Develop training for academic department chairs and deans that focuses on the unique instructional qualities of online and hybrid programs.

Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning

Overall evaluation

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet this standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

Faculty assess student learning in order to determine what students have learned. Further, faculty needs to document their assessment of student learning, which processes should be sustainable over the long run. Since BCC's "warning" based on its 2011 PRR, the College has made significant and highly commendable progress towards assessing and documenting student learning.

- The revised Outcomes Assessment Handbook provides clear and useful guidance across the spectrum of assessment practices.
- The work of the Assessment Fellows in providing workshops on curriculum mapping, basic assessment practices, the design of learning outcomes as well as of rubrics all

- point toward healthy professional development for faculty. The number of additional professional development opportunities that support faculty in their assessment responsibilities, especially in regard to the development of assignments to “promote integrated learning skills and...analytical thinking” is commendable.
- The College’s development of internal accountability through meta-analysis of assessment reports is further evidence of the College’s commendable improvements since the 2011 PRR. The Faculty Senate has created the Learning Assessment Committee (LAC).
 - Some faculty is clearly articulating the alignment between specific assignments in their courses and the relevant outcomes in that course. Some faculty show the alignment between certain outcomes in a given course with the relevant program outcomes to that course.
 - The General Education Committee and its assessment subcommittee have undertaken a solid approach to the assessment of their recently LEAP-informed program. They have difficulty in some cases collecting a statistically significant number of artifacts to make the assessment of a given outcome as strong as it could be; perhaps with the explicit alignment of course activities and General Education outcomes on the syllabi, the Committee might find it easier to identify more readily collectible artifacts. Another challenge that confronts the Committee in finding enough artifacts is that they wait until students have earned 45 credits. While this makes great sense, given the graduation and retention rates, the Committee might reconsider this credit benchmark.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices

- The College has made important progress in creating an institutional practice of assessing student learning outcomes. Particularly important in this regard is support for faculty in designing assignments to assess for student learning in a given course.
- The College has made good use of the LEAP outcomes for its General Education program.
- The College has adopted a transparent process for reporting on the assessment of student learning, and the Board has emphasized its support for and valuing of this process with the monthly reports it receives on assessment.
- The College has created an end-of-year meta-analysis of assessment activities to measure overall performance at both the unit and institutional level. It has a mechanism in place to continuously refine and develop the unit and institutional review process so that it is institutionalized and part of the College’s assessment practices.
- The College provides systemic professional development opportunities such as local workshops, TK-20 training and full financial support to attend assessment conferences to promote and sustain assessment in academic and AES units.
- The College provides a clearly articulated and consistent assessment framework through the coordinated efforts of CIE, the assessment fellows and the LAC.
- The College’s expectations on outcomes assessment are consistently communicated.

Suggestions

- Bergen might evaluate its assessment programs for their sustainability.
- Bergen might examine how a comprehensive course-based learning outcomes assessment program might add to the sustainability of its overall assessment program, as well as how it supports the program and General Education program reviews.
- Bergen might examine how a broader use of rubrics might help both student in the learning process and faculty in the assessment process.
- The faculty should consider making explicit the alignments on their syllabi of course activities to course learning outcomes; course learning outcomes to program outcomes; and course activities to General Education outcomes;
- Bergen should continue to make progress in refining program learning outcomes and curriculum maps in order to demonstrate a tighter link between required courses, elective courses and program learning outcomes.
- The College should revise the Summative Assessment Rubric to reflect maturation observed in recent outcomes assessment work.
- The College should review the 45 credit threshold for assessing the General Education program.

Recommendations

- The visiting team supports the self-study recommendation to clearly demonstrate linkage between the assessment of student learning and student success matrices such as retention, graduation and transfer rates and student satisfaction.
- The College should consider the efficacy of the two assessments year cycle, especially in the context of academic program review, where it is out of sync with the program review five year cycle.
- Program reviews need to reflect the direct assessment of program learning outcomes.

VII. Conclusion

The visiting team thanks the College President, the Board, the Self-Study Steering Committee and all the working groups for their efforts in developing the self-study and contributing to this evaluation report. The Team also thanks the College for their hospitality and professionalism throughout the visit.