NEASC ACCREDITATION SELF-STUDY · 2010

NORTHERN ESSEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE

HAVERHILL & LAWRENCE, MASSACHUSETTS

NORTHERN ESSEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE

HAVERHILL AND LAWRENCE

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ABBREVIATION GLOSSARY

AMP — Academic Master Plan
ARTC — Academic Resource & Tutoring Center
ATD — Achieving the Dream
ACA — All College Assembly
ACE — American Council on Education
AFSCME — American Federation of State, County and Technical Municipal Employees
AI — Appreciative Inquiry
BHE — Massachusetts Board of Higher Education
BOT — Board of Trustees
CSRT — Campus Safety Response Team
CPAC — Career Planning & Advising Center
CASTL — Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
CIT — Center for Instructional Technology
CBA — Collective Bargaining Agreement
CCLA— Community College Leadership Academy
CCSSE— Community College Survey of Student Engagement
CDLC — Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium
DHHS — Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services
DCE — Division of Continuing Education
ECE —Early Childhood Education Program
ESL — English as a Second Language
ESOL — English for Speakers of Other Languages
FERPA — Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act
FAFSA — Free Application for Federal Student Aid
KPIs — Key Performance Indicators
LAC — Learning Accommodations Center
LC — Learning Communities
LOVE — Living our Vision of Excellence Committee
MASFAA — Massachusetts Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators
MCCAC — Massachusetts Community College Athletic Conference
MCO — Massachusetts Colleges Online
MCCC — Massachusetts Community College Council
MTA — Massachusetts Teacher Association
NCBI — National Coalition Building Institute
NJCAA — National Junior College Athletic Association
OFSD — Office of Faculty and Staff Development
PM — Process Management
SOTL — Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
SOLS — Student Orientation Leaders
SFIG — Staff and Faculty Inquiry Group

TEAM CO-CHAIRS

Lane Glenn

Judith Kamber

Jim Murphy

NEASC CORE TEAM

Babak Alian

Mary Chatigny

Christine DeRosa

Joe Edwards

David Hartleb

Ellen Grondine

Maggie Lucey

Kathy Ronaldson

Nora Sheridan

Barbara Stachniewicz

Suzanne Van Wert

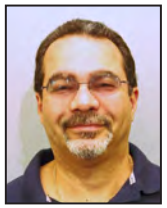
Ellen Wentland

Sue Wolfe

STANDARDS COMMITTEES CO-CHAIRS

1. Mission & Purposes *and* 11. Integrity

Bill Heineman



Jorge Santiago

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Mary Chatigny, Gail Feigenbaum, Isabelle Gagne, Gladys Gomez

2. Planning & Evaluation

Rick Lizotte

Beth Wilcoxson

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Melba Acevedo, Paula Richards, Jane Thiefels, Sue Wolfe

3. Organization & Governance

Terry Cargan

Christine DeRosa

Nita Lamborghini

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dianne Lahaye, Dawna Perez

4. Academic Program

Steve Mathis

Janice Rogers

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Barbara Stachniewicz, Linda Shea, Cindy Therrien, Jody Carson, Ellen Wentland

5. Faculty

Gene Wintner

Deirdre Budzyna

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Beth Donovan, Suzanne Van Wert, Tom White, Ken Thomas, Andrew Morse

STANDARDS COMMITTEES CO-CHAIRS

6. Students

Dina Brown

Trish Schade

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Mary Ellen Ashley, Tina Favara, Donna Marquis, Marilyn McCarthy, Nancy Nickerson, Lynn Ricketts, Brenda Salines, Sue Shain, Nora Sheridan

7. Library & Other Information Resources

Gail Stuart

Mark Reinhold

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Joan Scionti, Stephen Slaner, Sharon McDermot, Pat Morrow, Pat Machado, Lis Espinoza, Tricia Butler

8. Physical & Technological Resources

Frank Dushame

Sue Grolnic

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Jeffrey Bickford, Bette Brown, Tom Goulet, Joan Scionti, Philip Mawford

9. Financial Resources

Jessica Cogswell

Marie McDonnell

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Bonnie Doherty, Allan Hislop, Susan Martin, Habib Maagoul, Kristen Quinn

10. Public Disclosure

Clare Thompson Ostrander

Amy Callahan

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Niurka Aybar, Maureen O'Leary

INSTITUTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS FORM

Date: **August 6, 2010**

1. Corporate name of institution: **Northern Essex Community College**

2. Date institution was chartered or authorized: **September 1960**

3. Date institution enrolled first students in degree programs: **September 1961**

4. Date institution awarded first degrees: **June 1963**

5. Type of control:

Public	**Private**
☒ State	❑ Independent, not-for-profit
❑ City	❑ Religious Group (Name of Church)
❑ Other	❑ Proprietary

❑Other: (Specify) _____

6. By what agency is the institution legally authorized to provide a program of education beyond high school, and what degrees is it authorized to grant? **New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc., through its Commission on Institutions of Higher Education.**

7. Level of postsecondary offering (check all that apply)

- ❑ Less than one year of work
- ❑ First professional degree
- ☒ At least one but less than two years
- ❑ Master's and/or work beyond the first professional degree
- ☒ Diploma or certificate programs of at least two but less than four years
- ❑ Work beyond the master's level but not at the doctoral level (e.g., Specialist in Education)
- ☒ Associate degree granting program of at least two years
- ❑ A doctor of philosophy or equivalent degree
- ❑ Four- or five-year baccalaureate degree granting program
- ❑ Other doctoral programs
- ❑ Other (Specify) _____

8. Type of undergraduate programs (check all that apply)

☒ Occupational training at the Crafts/clerical level (cerrificate or diploma)

❑ Liberal arts and general

❑ Occupational training at the technical or semi-professional level (degree)

☒ Teacher preparatory

☒ Two-year programs designed for full transfer to a baccalaureate degree

❑ Professional

❑ Other_____

9. The calendar system at the institution is:

☒ Semester ❑ Quarter

❑ Trimester ❑ Other _____

10. What constitutes the credit hour load for a full-time equivalent (FTE) student each semester?

a) Undergraduate **15** credit hours

b) Graduate _____ credit hours

c) Professional _____ credit hours

11. Student population: (As of Fall 2009)

a) Degree-seeking students:

	Undergraduate	**Graduate**	**Total**
Full-time student headcount	2865	NA	NA
Part-timestudent headcount	4520	NA	NA
FTE	4.493	NA	NA

b) Number of students (headcount) in non-credit, short- term courses: **3,752 (unduplicated)**

12. List all programs accredited by a nationally recognized, specialized accrediting agency.

Program	Agency	Accredited since	Last Reviewed	Next Review
Dental Assisting	Commission on Dental Accreditation of the American Dental Association 211 East Chicago Avenue Chicago, IL 60611 June 1985	June 1985	2008	2015
Medical Assisting	Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs 1361 Park Street Clearwater, FL 33756	November 1993	January 2005	January 2014
Nursing Practical Nursing	National League for Nursing Accrediting Council, 3343 Peachtree Rd NE, Suite 500, Atlanta, GA 30326	June 1972 June 1989	February 2005	Spring 2013
Radiologic Technology	The Joint Review Committee on Education in Radiologic Technology, 20 N. Wacker Dr., Suite 2850, Chicago, IL 60606-2901	December 1974	November 2006	November 2014
Respiratory Care	Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care, 1248 Harwood Road, Bedford, TX 76021-4244	1976	Self Study Report submitted February 2009; Onsite visit October 2009	TBD
Sleep Technology	Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs 1361 Park Street, Clearwater, FL 33756	2005	2008	2015
Paralegal	American Bar Association	1983	2004	2011 (Re-approval Report Due May 15, 2011, site visit to follow
Early Childhood Education	National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)	2007	2007 (annual reports submitted 2008, 2009)	2014
Human Services	Council for Standards in Human Services Education (CSHSE)	1985	2008	2013

13. Off-campus Locations. List all instructional locations other than the main campus. For each site, indicate whether the location offers full-degree programs or 50% or more of one or more degree programs. Record the full-time equivalent enrollment (FTE) for the most recent year. Add more rows as needed.

	Full degree	**50%-99%**	**FTE**
A. In-state Locations			
Lawrence Campus	All Programs		1,140
B. Out-of -state Locations			

14. International Locations: For each overseas instructional location, indicate the name of the program, the location, and the headcount of students enrolled for the most recent year. An overseas instructional location is defined as "any overseas location of an institution, other than the main campus, at which the institution matriculates students to whom it offers any portion of a degree program or offers on-site instruction or instructional support for students enrolled in a predominantly or totally on-line program." Do not include study abroad locations.

Name of program(s)	Location	Headcount

15. Degrees and certificates offered 50% or more electronically: For each degree or Title IV-eligible certificate, indicate the level (certificate, associate's, baccalaureate, master's, professional, doctoral), the percentage of credits that may be completed on-line, and the FTE of matriculated students for the most recent year. Enter more rows as needed.

Name of program	**Degree level**	**% on-line**	**FTE**
Criminal Justice	Associate's	100	
Liberal Arts	Associate's	100	
General Studies	Associate's	100	
Business Transfer	Associate's	100	
CIS Applications	Associate's	100	
Liberal Arts: Philosophy Option	Associate's	100	
Liberal Arts: Psychology Option	Associate's	100	
Liberal Arts: History Option	Associate's	89	
Liberal Arts: CIS Option	Associate's	89	
Liberal Arts: Political Science Option	Associate's	89	
Business Management	Associate's	89	
Business Management: Computer Applications Option	Associate's	89	
Sleep Technology	Associate's	89	

16. Instruction offered through contractual relationships: For each contractual relationship through which instruction is offered for a Title IV-eligible degree or certificate, indicate the name of the contractor, the location of instruction, the program name, and degree or certificate, and the number of credits that may be completed through the contractual relationship. Enter more rows as needed.

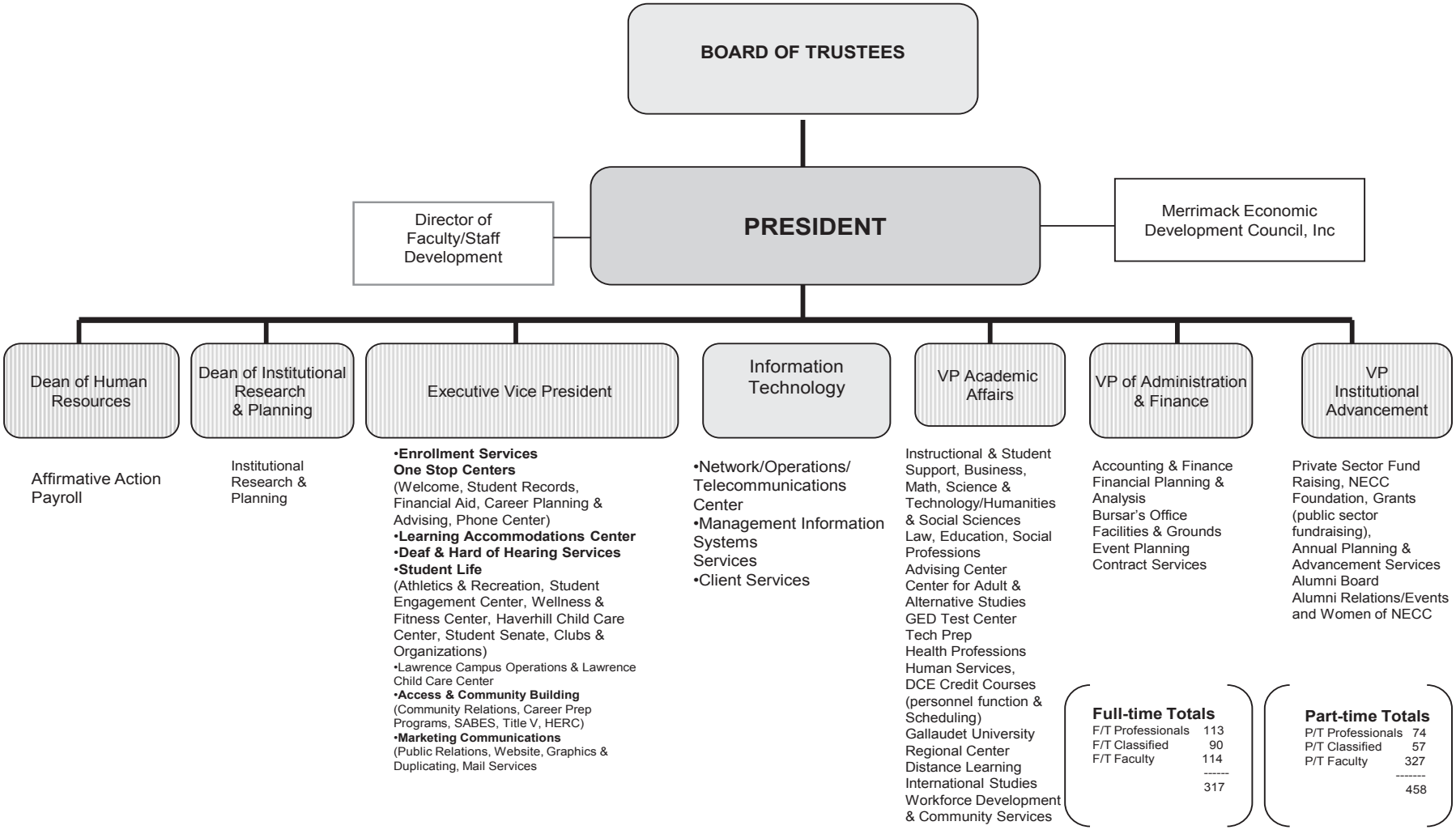
17. List by name and title the chief administrative officers of the institution. (Use the table on the following page.)

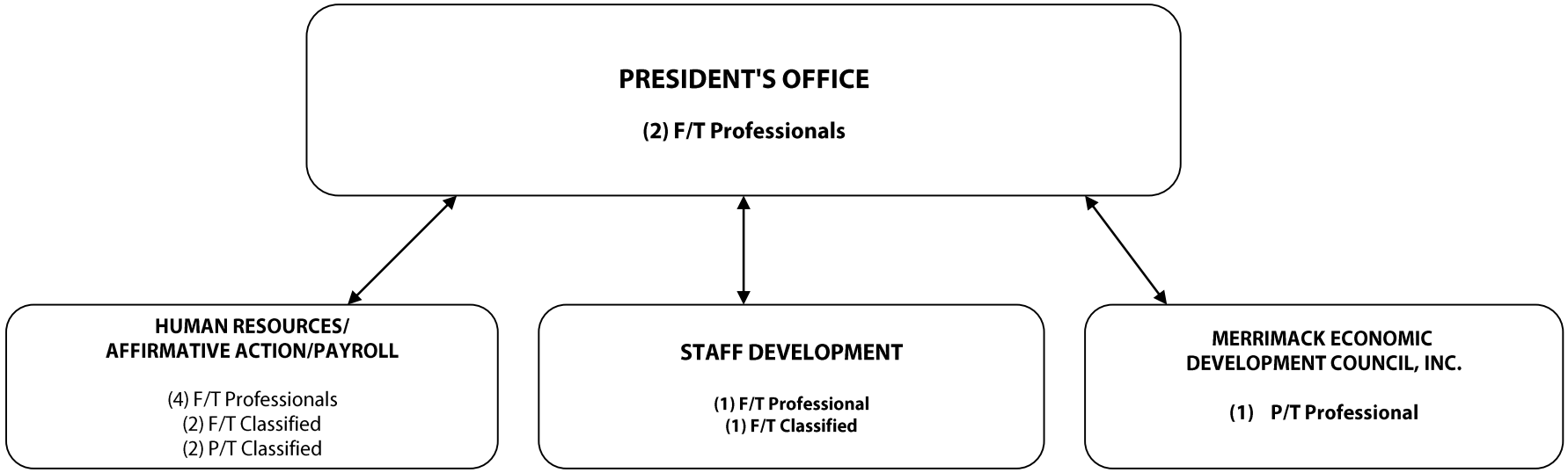
CHIEF INSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS			
Chair Board of Trustees	Joseph C. Edwards, Esq	Chairman	2002
President/CEO	Dr. David Hartleb	President	1996
Executive Vice President	Mary Ellen Ashley	Executive Vice President of Enrollment Management and Student Services	1997
Chief Academic Officer	Dr. Lane Glenn	Vice President of Academic Affairs	2006
Deans of Schools and Colleges	Sue Grolnic	Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences	2007
	Ellen Grondine	Dean of Law, Education, and Social Professions	2005
	Bill Heineman	Dean of Business, Math, Science & Technology	2007
	David Kelley	Dean of Instructional and Student Support	2004
	Jackie Long-Goding	Dean of Health Professions	2004
Chief Financial Officer	Sue M. Wolfe	Vice President of Administration & Finance	2008
Chief Student Services Officer	Mary Ellen Ashley	Executive Vice President of Enrollment Management and Student Services	1997
Planning			
Institutional Research	Dr. Thomas Fallon	Dean of Institutional Research & Planning	1997
Assessment	Ellen Wentland	Assistant Dean of Program Review, Outcomes Assessment, And Educational Effectiveness	2004
Development	Jean Poth	Vice President of Institutional Advancement	2001
Library	David Kelly	Dean of Instructional and Student Support	2004
Chief Information Officer	Jeffrey Bickford	Chief of Information Technology Service	2008
Continuing Education	Kelly Osmer	Dean, Workforce Development & Community Education	2003

Grants/Research	Jean Poth	Vice President of Institutional Advancement	2001
Admissions	Nora Sheridan	Associate Vice President of Enrollment Services	2007
Registrar	Susan Shain	Registrar	2007
Financial Aid	Nora Sheridan	Associate Vice President of Enrollment Services	2007
Public Relations	Ernie Greenslade	Director	1994
Alumni Association	Libby Jensen	Director	2001
Other			

January, 2010

NECC Organizational Chart

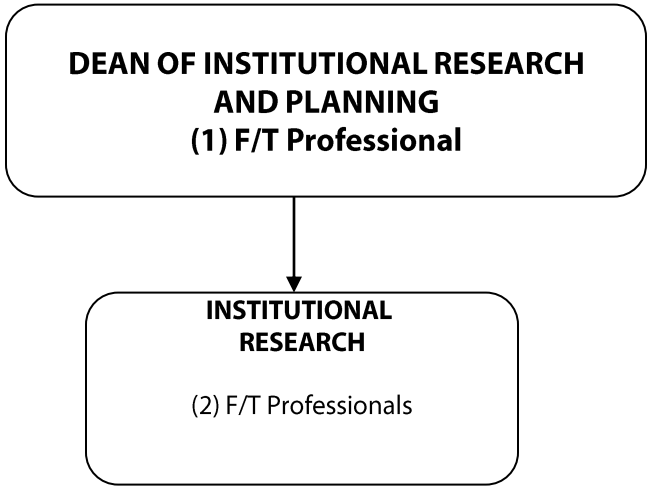




Full-time Totals	
F/T Professionals	8
F/T Classified	3
F/T Faculty	0
	11

Part-time Totals	
P/T Professional	0
P/T Classified	2
P/T Faculty	0
	2

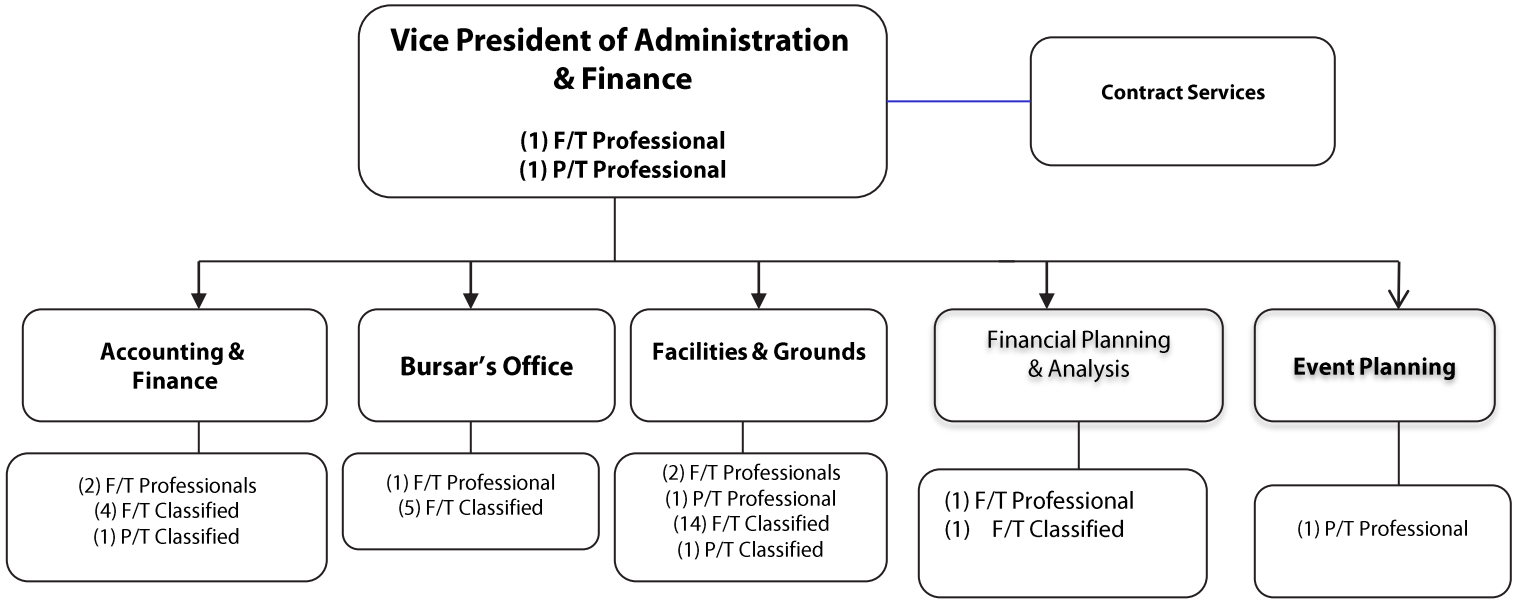
SPRING 2010 SEMESTER



F/T Totals	
FT Professionals	3
FT Classified	0
FT Faculty	0
	3

P/T Totals	
PT Professionals	0
PT Classified	0
PT Faculty	0
	0

SPRING 2010 SEMESTER



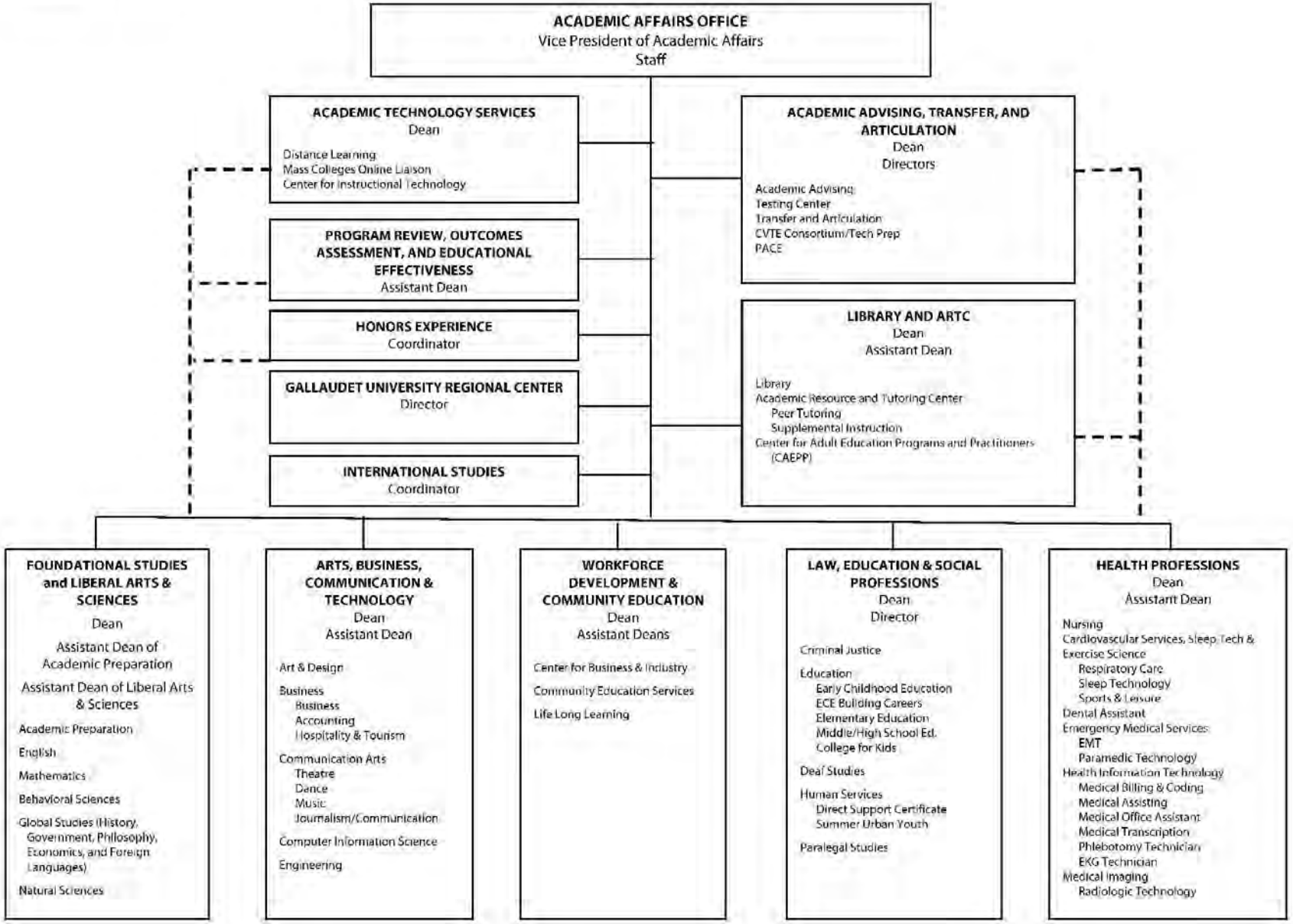
F/T Totals	
F/T Professionals	7
F/T Classified	25
F/T Faculty	0
	32

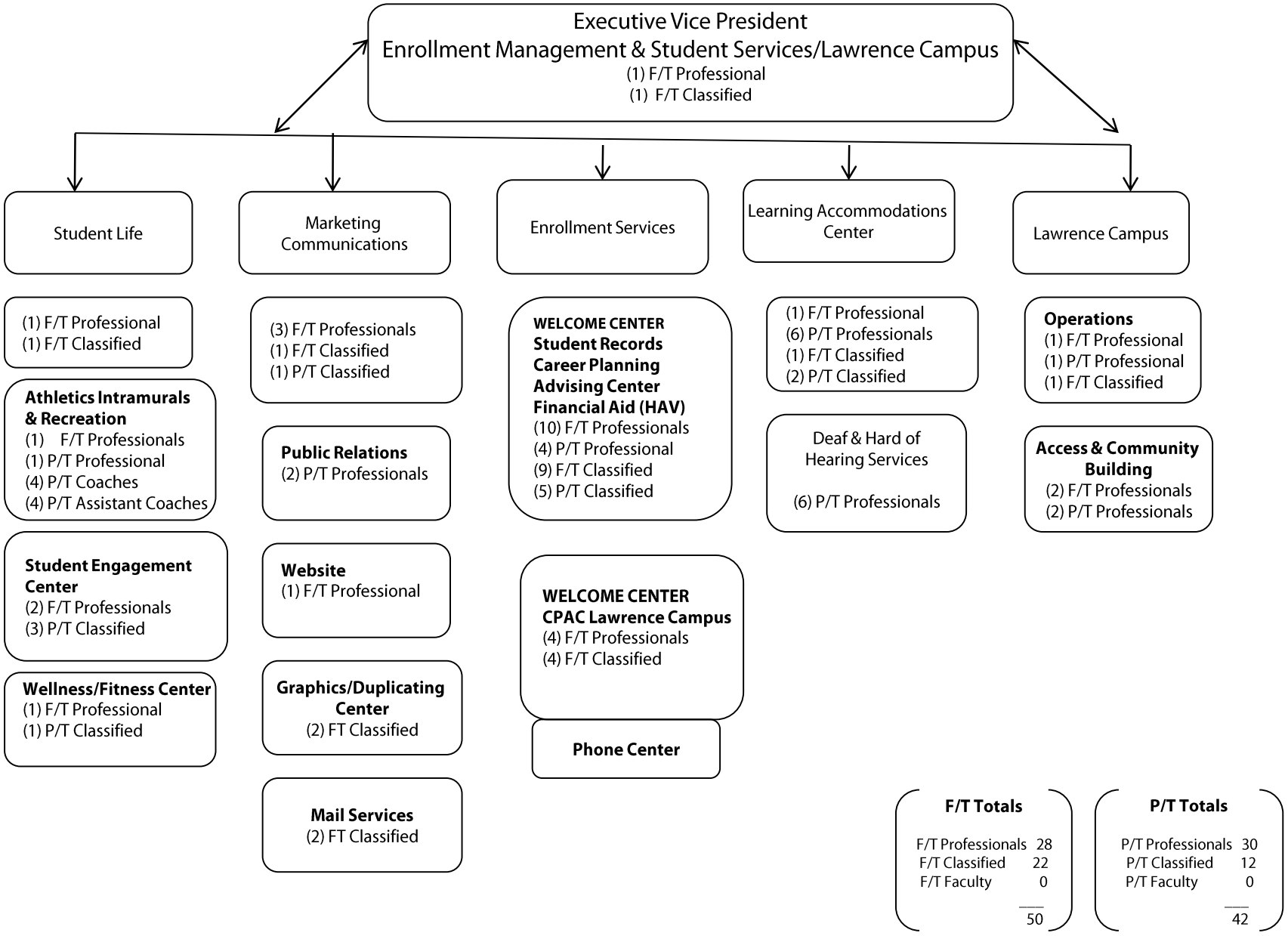
P/T Totals	
P/T Professionals	3
P/T Classified	2
P/T Faculty	0
	5

SPRING 2010 SEMESTER

Effective: July 1, 2010

NORTHERN ESSEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE
ACADEMIC AFFAIRS





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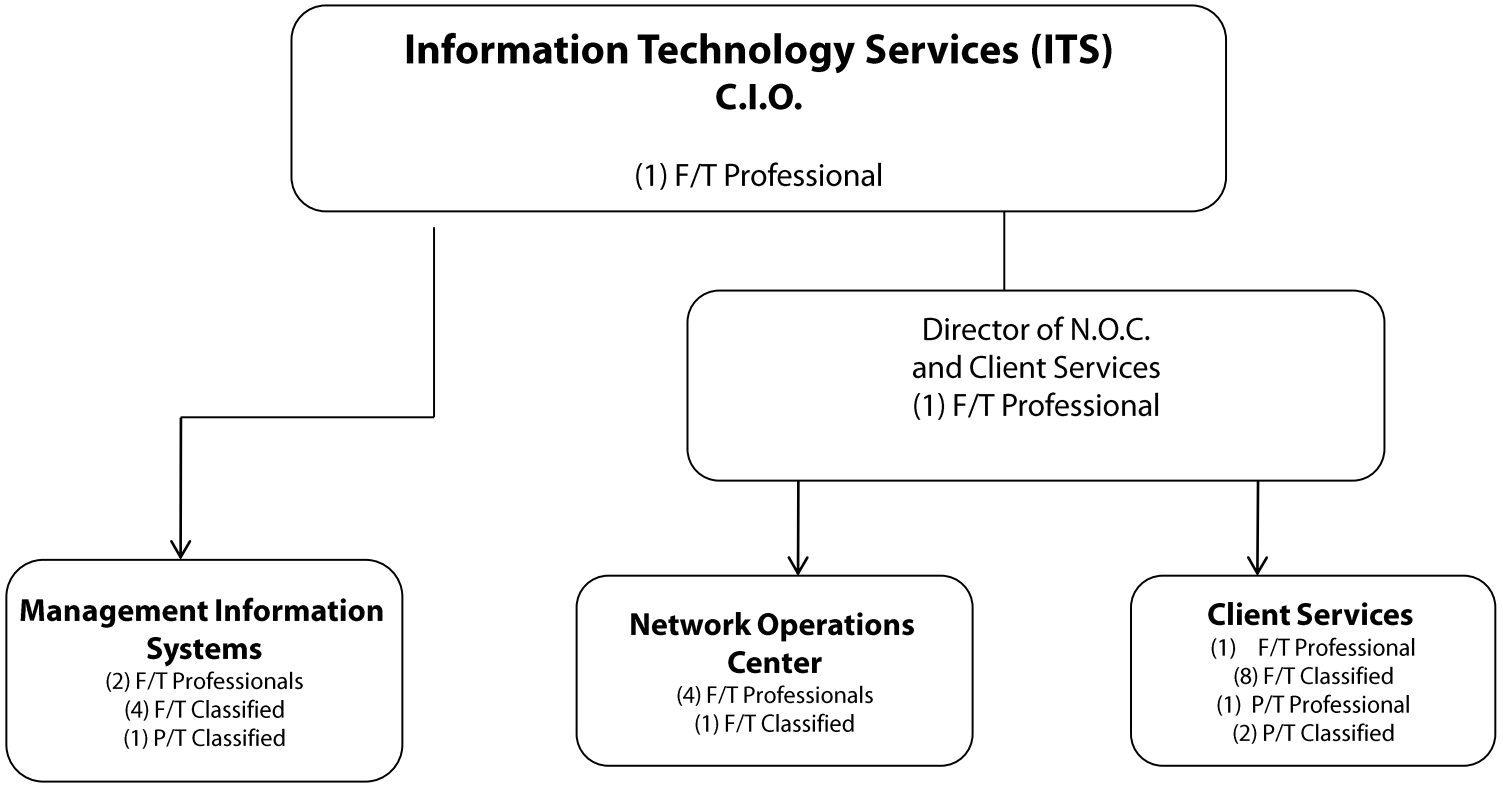
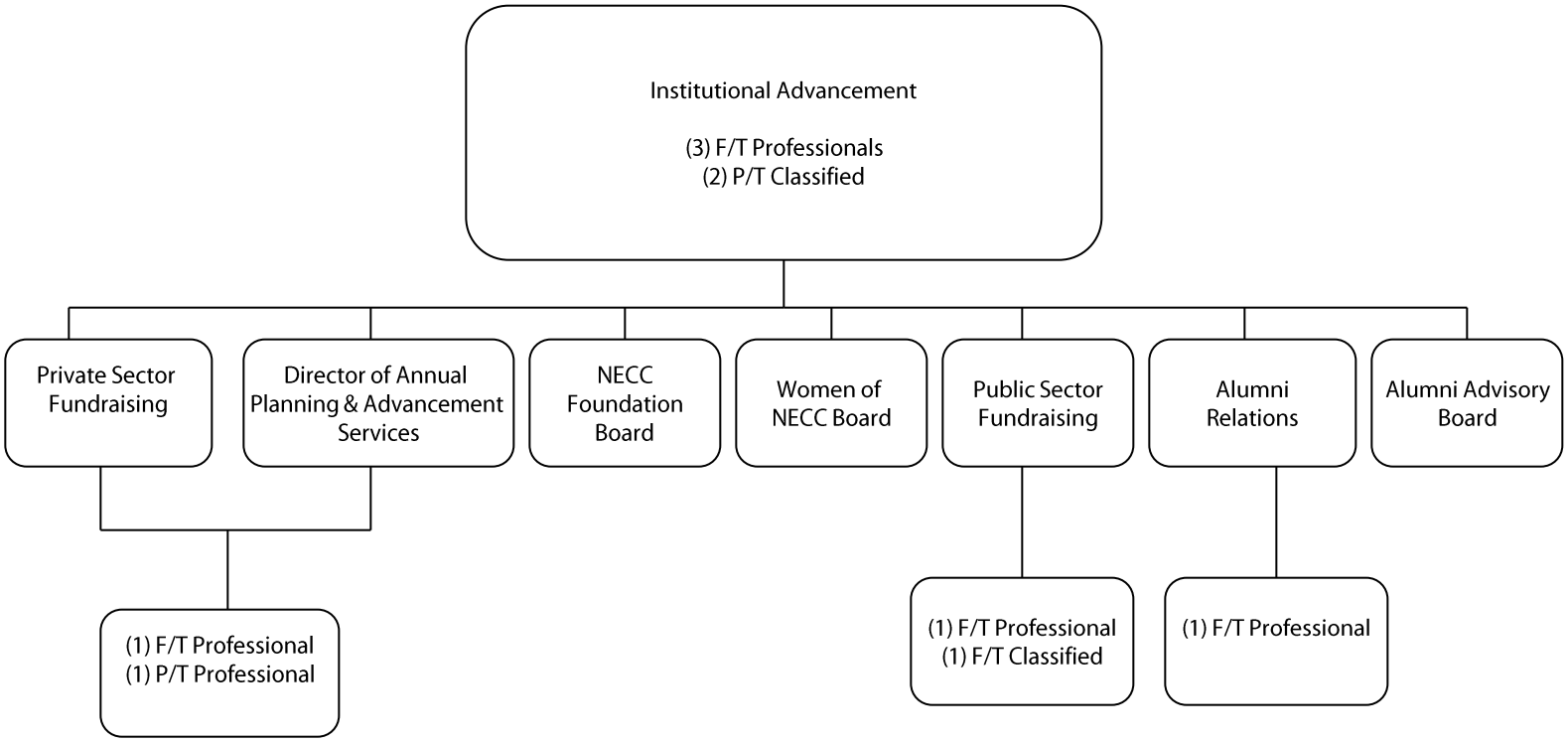


F/T Totals	
F/T Professionals	9
F/T Classified	13
F/T Faculty	0
	22

P/T Totals	
P/T Professional	1
P/T Classified	3
P/T Faculty	0
	4

SPRING 2010 SEMESTER



F/T TOTALS	
F/T Professional	6
F/T Classified	1
F/T Faculty	0
	7

P/T TOTALS	
P/T Professional	1
P/T Classified	2
P/T Faculty	0
	3

SPRING 2010 SEMESTER

CHRONOLOGY

September 1960: The Massachusetts Board of Regional Community Colleges (MBRCC) decided to establish a community college in Haverhill. It named Harold Bentley, then President of Worcester Junior College as the "Director."

November 1960: The MBRCC voted to name the institution Northern Essex Community College (the second in what has become a network of 15 community colleges).

September 15, 1961: Northern Essex launched its first classes in a temporary facility, the renovated Greenleaf Elementary School in the Bradford section of Haverhill. At this time, the college enrolled 181 students; it employed four full-time faculty and eight part-timers.

June 1963: Northern Essex held its first Commencement exercises.

1964: The college first opened its Division of Continuing Education.

1967: Faculty members organized the NECC Faculty Association. This same year, ground breaking occurred on the Elliott Street site, which the city of Haverhill had donated for a permanent campus.

1970: The college completed its first NEASC Self-Study and was awarded accreditation. Also during this time, the college created the Academic Council, an internal governance structure.

September 1971: The college's permanent Haverhill campus opened as a fully accredited institution with an enrollment of over 2,000 students. At this time, the college also began an educational presence in the city of Lawrence.

1975: Collective bargaining emerged with the faculty and professional staff voting to be represented by the MCCC/MTA/NEA. In the same year, its founding President Harold Bentley retired, and John R. Dimitry, then President of Macomb County Community College (Michigan), began his tenure in September 1975 as the college's second president.

1980: The college received its second ten-year accreditation by the NEASC. That same year, public higher education in the Commonwealth was reorganized. The MBRCC was dissolved and replaced with a Board of Regents and local Boards of Trustees at each college as overseers.

January 1985: The Lawrence Education-Employment Project (LEEP) first opened its doors in Lawrence. It occupied several facilities in the city and was the precursor to the college's Lawrence campus initiative.

1985: The college underwent a successful interim evaluation visit by the NEASC.

1987: The Northern Essex Faculty Association voted no confidence in the President. This occurred during a period when collective bargaining negotiations had stalled and President Dimitry was serving as the Chairperson of the Community Colleges Presidents' Council. Largely in response to this action, the President initiated a series of meetings and instituted a college-wide Master Planning Committee charged primarily with drafting a Charter for a new internal governance structure.

June 1988: The All-College Council was established, replacing what had earlier been known as the Academic Council.

1989: The college's Mission Statement and Goals were developed.

1990: The college underwent its third successful Self-Study as part of the NEASC accreditation process.

May 16, 1991: The Prudential Insurance Company of America formally donated to the Commonwealth, its 68,000 square foot building located in the heart of the city of Lawrence, for use as a permanent campus of Northern Essex Community College.

1995: The college underwent a successful interim evaluation by the NEASC.

January 1996: John Dimitry retired, and David Hartleb, formerly Vice President at the University of Cincinnati, began his tenure as the college's third President.

1996-1997: The college undertook an 18-month strategic planning process, the first in its history. The process produced Institutional Priorities, endorsed at an All-College Council meeting on May 1, 1998, accepted by the President and approved by the Board of Trustees on June 2, 1998.

August 1, 1999: The college opened the Amesbury Street Extension campus in Lawrence.

2000: The MCCC/MTA ratifies its new Agreement; the college undergoes its fourth Self-Study and NEASC reaccreditation visit.

2001 – 2007: In 2001, the college was designated as the only Hispanic Serving Institution in New England, and in 2002, NECC was awarded a five-year, $ 2.2M Title V grant to improve the student services available to our Hispanic students as well as their retention and graduation rates. A one stop student services center was implemented on the Lawrence Campus providing full equity with student services offered in Haverhill. And additional bilingual faculty and staff were able to be hired as role models to enhance diversity, to strengthen methodologies to recognize differences in learning and to construct new models for student success.

2005: The college completed a successful interim evaluation by the NEASC.

Summer 2005: The **c**ollege opened the newly renovated Ourania Behrakis One Stop Student Services Center, which features all student services, such as admissions, assessment, registration, financial aid, advising, career development, learning accommodations, deaf and hard of hearing services and the bursar in one space. This major project was made possible with a $1 million donation from George Behrakis in memory of his sister Ourania Behrakis, a former member of the college's board of trustees.

September 2005: The college celebrated the opening of a new Technology Center on the Haverhill Campus, the first new construction on the campus since it was built in 1971. The center features state-of-the-art computer classrooms, network and laser/fiberoptic labs, smart classrooms, instructional facilities for fine and performing arts programs, the Center for Business & Industry, and a multimedia conference center for college and community use. A public/private partnership, this building was funded with $2 million in privately donated funds and $7.5 million from the state of Massachusetts.

2006-2007: The college conducted a 12-month strategic planning process using "Appreciative Inquiry," a strengths-based approach to planning and group process. The newly developed plan included new "core values" as well as five "strategic directions" to guide the college from 2007-2011.

2007: The college submitted a successful "Report on the Status of Support Services Provided to Online Students" to the NEASC-CIHE.

2007: The college was selected as one of four community colleges in Massachusetts to participate in *Achieving the Dream*, a multiyear national initiative to help more community college students succeed. The initiative is particularly concerned about student groups that have traditionally faced the most significant barriers to success, including low-income students and students of color.

INTRODUCTION

NORTHERN ESSEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE (NECC) began the self-study process in the summer of 2008, shortly after completion of our 2008-2011 Strategic Plan.

In many ways the college's approach to the self-study paralleled its approach to strategic planning. Preparations began for strategic planning in 2006 with the support and leadership of President Hartleb who enthusiastically encouraged the use of Appreciative Inquiry to guide the planning process. Appreciative Inquiry is a strengths-based philosophy organized around the principles of focusing on best practices, achievements and areas of excellence.

The planning team members conducted over 150 interviews with staff, faculty, students and members of the community to prepare for an "Appreciative Summit" entitled, "Inspiring the Future: Achieving Regional Excellence." The summit drew more than 170 participants, including faculty, staff, students, administrators, trustees and community members. The strategic plan which was approved and distributed in 2007, provided strategic directions and core values. The president asked the college community to build on this work by developing divisional and departmental goals. It is, in all respects, a "living" document.

In fall 2006, Dr. Lane Glenn joined the college as our new academic vice president. Dr. Glenn, a self-proclaimed optimist, brought with him a wealth of experience, energy, and new ideas. Dr. Glenn was also an experienced AI facilitator which made the AI journey all the more fluid. It was in this same spirit of collaboration and discovery that the college community was invited to participate in our 2010 self-study. In August 2008, Dr. Glenn asked Judith Kamber (Dean of Professional Development) and Jim Murphy (Assistant Professor of Theatre) to co-chair the NECC Self-Study. Judith and Jim received this request as an exciting opportunity to bring together members of the college community to look more deeply into the way NECC adopts processes for change and serves students, employees, communities, systems, structures, and the environment. The college wanted to create a self- study that would offer a vital opportunity to explore its practices in all areas of the college, analyze data, and create a process of discovery and professional development for those who elected to work on the standards.

The work began by appointing a Core Committee comprised of faculty, staff, and students from all areas of the college. An open invitation was extended to the entire campus community to engage in the self-study; as the list of interested participants was reviewed, co-chairs were selected based on their proven commitment to the college, their willingness to work collaboratively, their creativity, curiosity, and diversity of strengths. High-level administrators were not asked to chair standards in their own areas.

The initiative was launched by planning a two-day retreat for all

those who had come forward. The retreat was an opportunity to provide information about NEASC and the accreditation process as well valuable information about NECC, Institutional Research data, Process Management and an introduction to the self-study blog (which would serve as a repository for all of our work). Again, the retreat was framed in the context of AI. During the retreat and in the month that followed (January-February), many additional volunteers came forward and joined the various standards as team members.

Throughout the spring semester and summer of 2009, the teams began their work in earnest. These teams were now able to build on the many initiatives that NECC had launched in the past 10 years as well as some of the newer initiatives. Some of these include:

- Process Management: (an offspring of Continuous Quality Management): A collaborative approach to problem-solving based on understanding and using data.
- The Academic Master Plan: initiated in 2007 after the Strategic Plan was developed, the process included AI tools to establish goals and objectives.
- Achieving the Dream: A nation-wide initiative aimed at helping college students succeed in completing coursework and earning degrees.
- AI and Strengths-Based Initiatives: Two approaches to individual and organizational development based on inquiry, discovery, and positive change.
- The National Coalition Building Institute: Provides diversity training for faculty, staff, and students.
- Leadership Training: Includes support for the Community College Leadership Academy, establishment of NECC Leadership Academy and support for participants to attend the Chair Academy.

In the fall of 2009, the academic vice president and co-chairs met regularly with the chairs of the standards as they and their teams developed drafts which were completed and submitted in October and were then posted on the NEASC Self-Study Blog in November.

All members of the college community were regularly informed that the blog was open for comment and a public forum featured presentations from each chair with an opportunity for comments from the audience. An article was printed in the college's newspaper and the college community received college-wide e-mail regularly to encourage participation.

In early December 2009, the core committee came together to review all blog comments for qualitative analysis and the determination of possible themes. Shortly after this, the drafts were turned over to two highly respected faculty members for editing.

The second draft was reviewed and approved by the Core Team and by the President in March 2010. It was then shared publicly on the college's website, and with NEASC staff for feedback.

In all, close to 100 people actively participated in the self-study and our intention to create an open, welcome, thoughtful process for review, where our strengths, challenges and plans for the future, were explored.

INSTITUTIONAL OVERVIEW

NORTHERN ESSEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE serves more than 7,000 students each semester on two campuses located in the beautiful, historic Merrimack Valley region of northeast Massachusetts. The suburban Haverhill campus sits on 106 acres near Kenoza Lake and features a new Technology Center and an award-winning Student One-Stop Center. Our urban Lawrence campus consists of two buildings in the heart of downtown, the larger Dimitry building and smaller Fournier building. Additionally, the college has recently leased space in the Riverwalk office park, and there are plans to open a new Health and Technology Center in the spring of 2013 to meet the demands of the regional workforce and significant increasing enrollment.

NECC has been building an organizational culture that prizes initiative and innovation, and seeks to identify and develop the *strengths* in students, faculty, staff, and programs in order to grow and improve. The college is also committed to using evidence to guide our planning and decision-making.

These values are reflected in recent work using Appreciative Inquiry to develop a three-year strategic plan for the college, and in investment in Process Management, the use of quality tools to continually improve programs and services for our students and community. References to these important processes and tools may be found throughout this self-study.

For the last three years, NECC has also been one of more than 100 colleges across the country participating in the Achieving the Dream initiative, which aims to help more community college students succeed, particularly low-income students and students of color. Participation as an *Achieving the Dream* college has served as a unifying experience and confirmed the commitment to an organizational culture with an emphasis on strengths and the rigorous application of data.

Through a shared investigation of student success and a desire for a systematic way to analyze it, the college has created a set of "Key Performance Indicators" (KPIs) that constantly monitor those things that are most important:

- Transition from developmental to and through college level courses
- Successful completion of "gatekeeper" courses
- Fall-to-fall retention
- Completion of degrees and certificates
- Diversity of faculty and staff

What gets measured gets noticed—and acted upon. These KPIs are shared across functional areas of the college, and used to set

goals and create cross-departmental teams around student success initiatives. Along with the college's strategic plan, they form the basis for annual goal setting for every division and department at the college.

As a result, the college has collectively shifted its thinking about its purpose in the community to a vision that goes beyond simply student access and toward both access and success. The results, as described in this self-study, include structural and policy changes, the reallocation of resources to support new initiatives and, most importantly, measurable changes in the success of our students.

Identifying and emphasizing strengths and successes, though, does not mean looking past the very real challenges we face. The college has prepared this self-study in the middle of the greatest economic crisis the country has experienced in nearly a century, and NECC, like every other college and university, has felt its effects. Even in the midst of exciting planning processes, the launching of new student success initiatives, the expansion of our Lawrence campus, and other areas of growth, the college had to grapple with severe budget reductions, layoffs, and restructuring.

At the same time, the college has seen during the last two years some of the most significant year-to-year growth in enrollment in the college's history. Between fall 2007 and fall 2008 our student head count increased 7.5%; and between fall 2008 and fall 2009 we increased another 5%. In only five years the student body has grown by 19%, or nearly 1,200 students. This has stretched the college's human resources—faculty, support staff, advisors, tutors, financial aid counselors, maintenance personnel, and everyone else—quite thin.

As a public community college in Massachusetts, 42% of the college's revenue has come in the form of annual state appropriations. After a short period of modest increases in state funding between 2005-2008, there have been two years in a row of significant reductions, with little relief in sight.

Times of adversity, though, are often times of creativity, learning, and growth—particularly if the organization is open to these possibilities. Richard Alfred, Christopher Shults, Ozan Jacquette, and Shelley Strickland, the authors of ***Community Colleges on the Horizon: Challenges, Choice or Abundance***, describe some important attributes of "Abundant Colleges." These are colleges that build upon strengths, and embrace and reward risk and change. They seek information about best practices, develop strategic capabilities in staff, and look to emphasize the whole institution, not component parts. Perhaps most importantly, the role of leaders in these "abundant" colleges is to "bring out the very best in people and the organization, irrespective of conditions in the environment."

Through NECC's commitment to strengths-based planning, rigorous analysis of data, specific measures of student success, and encouragement of risk and innovation, we are on the path to becoming an "Abundant College." As a result, as difficult as the last couple of years have been financially, they have also afforded the opportunity to focus on what matters most to the college, and to commit to improvements that will make the college stronger in the future:

- ***Long-Term Planning:*** The college recognizes that long-term planning has been a challenge for us in the past, due to the vagaries of state funding and our own organizational decisions. Over the last few years we have developed some valuable planning skills and tools (described in chapters two, eight, nine, and elsewhere in this self-study), and gained confidence in our ability to set multi-year goals. We have also made the critical decision to become less dependent on state funding for capital projects, facilities

maintenance, and even our operational budget. As a result, the college is examining the student fee structure, fund raising efforts, and entrepreneurial activities as sources of additional revenue. The college is seeking to build cash reserves, and we are paying careful attention to long-term planning for expenses. The college is developing asset inventory lists and planning for the life cycle of computers and major equipment. The college is creating multi-year plans for facilities improvements and investing now in energy efficient infrastructure that will save us money in the future. The college has been addressing the shortage of full-time faculty with a three-year plan to increase the percentage of courses taught by full-timers at the college. The president and cabinet are committed to these and other important long-range planning efforts .

- ***Information Technology****:* In FY-2010 the college received a $3.1 million share of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding. A critical decision was made to use this one-time source of funding to make some desperately needed strategic investments in facilities, infrastructure, and particularly in information technology. Nearly a third of this funding was used to replace outdated computer equipment, and to improve the hardware and software infrastructure of the entire college; and another twenty percent was allocated to adding "smart classrooms" on both campuses, including all of the necessary equipment and room modifications. Beginning in spring 2010, all of the general purpose classrooms at NECC are "smart," allowing faculty and students to share the benefits of current instructional technology. Equally important, these improvements are accompanied by a plan to replace this equipment on a regular cycle, and to extend the usefulness of computers through an upgrade and redeployment process.

- ***Professional and Organizational Development:*** As important as these investments in buildings, grounds, IT, and new faculty have been, particularly during such lean budget years, one of the great strengths as an "abundant" college is the constant commitment to individual and organizational development. The college recognizes that everyone has room to grow at every stage in their professional lives, and that some of the most important features of our institutional culture emerge in shared learning experiences.

- During the college's strategic planning process in 2007, the president made a pledge to develop "leadership at every level" throughout the institution. Less than a year later, with the guidance of faculty and staff from across the college, NECC launched its own Leadership Academy. The Academy is a yearlong experience for up to 15 employees in each class. Participants learn about community colleges, develop their own leadership skills, and complete a project that addresses a college need.

- Knowing that professional development needs vary from person to person, in the summer of 2009 the President's Cabinet adopted a "Commitment to Employees" statement that describes NECC's core values, and the culture the college is building through personal and organizational growth opportunities. In tandem with Human Resources, our Office of Faculty and Staff Development expanded its workshops and discussion groups, and will be launching a college wide survey in spring 2011 to determine what additional training and development needs exist within the college.

Observing that change is a necessary and constant theme in the universe, the Greek philosopher Heraclitus famously said, "You cannot step into the same river twice." Indeed, the flow of changes at

NECC since our last complete self-study in 2000 has been constant and powerful. In brief, these are some of our significant accomplishments, and accompanying challenges, as we complete our 2010 self-study:

Accomplishments

- *Planning for the Lawrence Campus:* When the college submitted the Fifth Year Interim Report in 2005 it was a few years into planning for an expansion of the Lawrence campus. In response to enrollment increases and the growing need in our region and across the state for health care workers, the college envisioned a new Health and Technology Center, to be built on the site of a dilapidated urban mall as both an educational asset and a contribution to economic development and urban renewal in downtown Lawrence. In December 2009 the city reaffirmed its transfer of the old mall and land to the college. Funding for the new building is expected as part of a 10-year, $2 billion state Capital Improvements for Higher Education bill. While construction plans are being drawn up, demolition of the existing site is anticipated in fall 2010, and the new building should open in March 2013.

- Even as this project gets underway, the college is also seeking to lease space in Lawrence that will combine non-credit, Workforce Development and Community Education programs, selected Business, Computer Science, and Hospitality credit programs, and Adult Basic Education in one place near the existing campus. This co-location of services will save the college money, while providing new opportunities to the fastest growing student population.

- *Institutionalizing Academic Program Review and Learning Outcomes Assessment:* In the Commission's response to the colleges Fifth Year Interim Report, we were asked to report in this self-study on progress toward institutionalizing academic program review and learning outcomes assessment processes. As described in chapters two, four, and elsewhere in this self-study, considerable progress has been made in these areas, and they are now considered some of our best institutional examples of effective self-assessment processes and "closing the loop." A Director of Program Review and Outcomes Assessment was hired in 2005, and under her guidance faculty and academic administrators have developed a comprehensive program review process that leads to regular public presentations and progress reports on recommendations. A parallel program learning outcomes assessment process has been developed, which also generates public presentations and progress reports.

- *Services for Distance Learning Students:* In the Commission's response to our Fifth Year Interim Report, the college was asked to submit a progress report in 2007, addressing the college's ability to provide the same level of student services to online and on-ground students. That report was accepted with particular commendation for improvements made in developing online academic advising, providing electronic self-service features to students (admissions, registration, financial aid, and degree audits), studying success rates of students in online courses, and using findings to make improvements in online programs and services.

- *Core Academic Skills:* As described in chapter four, the framework for general education at NECC has been undergoing methodical but significant change since our last self-study in 2000. By 2002 we had adopted three "degree competencies" (Writing, Critical Thinking, and Computer Fluency) which for a few years were largely

used only in our program-level learning outcomes assessment process. Recognizing that these three "competencies" were not sufficient and were not truly integrated across the curriculum and into multiple levels of the assessment process, the college adopted a new Vision for Core Academic Skills statement in 2009. The new framework includes Communication, Global Awareness, Information Literacy, Quantitative Reasoning, and Science and Technology. These Core Academic Skills are now forming the basis for more across-the-curriculum activities, and a more comprehensive assessment process that will include institutional level assessment of general education.

- *Strong commitment to public disclosure:* As described in chapter ten and elsewhere in this self-study, the college has built a strong commitment to *public disclosure* at NECC through our work gathering and analyzing data in Process Management teams, our efforts to engage both employees and the community in planning activities through Appreciative Inquiry, and through the continuous improvement initiatives developed through Achieving the Dream. The college regularly shares data—including sometimes uncomfortable figures—about student success, program effectiveness, and the availability of resources through many public channels on campus and off, including web pages, community mailings, open forums, focus groups, and conference presentations. As an indicator of the college's commitment to public disclosure as a means of engaging the community in an ongoing dialogue about educational effectiveness, the college was the only community college in Massachusetts to share the results of our 2007 Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) with USA Today when they were preparing a special report about CCSSE benchmark scores, "Engaging Minds at Community Colleges."

Challenges

- *Resources:* While the college's skills and capacity for long-term planning have grown, one of the greatest obstacles facing the college over the next few years, as described in chapter nine and elsewhere in this self-study, is reduced state support for operations. Continually declining state funds, combined with a low level of unrestricted reserves, and significant needs to support instruction and student support services, facilities improvements, deferred maintenance, and local student financial aid in the face of increasing college costs, will challenge the institution's ingenuity.

- *Prioritization of initiatives and appropriate demands on human resources:* A recurring theme in this self-study is a conundrum regularly faced by "abundant" colleges: "Opportunity Fatigue." There are frequent descriptions of how proud the college is of planning processes; of the success in engaging more faculty, staff, and students in them; and of the many new initiatives the college has undertaken to improve student success. At the same time, the college is often challenged to prioritize these initiatives, to summon sufficient resources at the right time, to communicate rapidly evolving plans effectively, and to avoid overburdening individual faculty and staff.

- *Diversity of Faculty:* Ethnic minorities made up about 28 percent of the NECC student body in fall 2008, compared to 22 percent in the population of cities and towns from which the college draws most of its students. In 2001 only 10.5% of the employees were ethnic minorities (only 5.6% of professional staff and 2.2% of faculty). By 2004 it had increased to 14.4% of all employees, 11% of professional staff, and 10% of faculty. Since then, despite significant recruitment efforts, policy changes, and improvements to hiring

processes (described in chapters three, five, and eleven), these percentages have not changed. Of particular concern is the diversity of the faculty—a situation that has seemed more difficult to affect given the less frequent turnover of positions, low salaries to attract candidates, and budget limitations which may restrict the number of new faculty hired for the next few years.

- *Institutional Level Assessment of General Education:* While the college is proud of its accomplishments in the areas of academic program review and learning outcomes assessment, it recognizes that our efforts to create a system for assessing the Core Academic Skills of our graduates are just beginning.

Each chapter in this self-study begins with short "Strengths/Challenges" assessments of our strengths and challenges for each standard. This organization is dynamic and complex—a flowing river of constant change—and these simple illustrations are not designed to capture every area of excellence or every obstacle that lies in our path. They are a reminder that there is something positive and worthy about the efforts in each standard, as well as room for continual improvement. To the reader, hopefully they serve as helpful guideposts for who we are and what we are aiming to become as an "abundant college."

SELF-STUDY NARRATIVE

STANDARD 1: MISSION STATEMENT

Strengths	Challenges
Broad engagement in planning	Revise mission statement
Strengths-based culture	Apply new mission statement to planning activities
Shared core values	

Description

The college's mission statement has remained the same since 1992, when it was changed to align with that of the Board of Higher Education of Massachusetts. The current statement says that the mission of Northern Essex Community College is

> *to serve the people of the Greater Merrimack Valley as a caring and comprehensive center of educational excellence that offers high quality, affordable adult and post secondary through the Associate Degree level, as well as a broad range of occupational programs and community services which enhance the social, cultural and economic life of the region.*

While many staff and students are aware that the college has a mission statement, some of them are not. A recent survey of 249 current students, for example, indicated that 54% knew that a mission statement exists, while 45% did not. When queried further, we discovered that 47% of those who knew a mission statement exists had no knowledge of any particular component. More encouragingly, a similar survey of faculty and staff members noted that 100% (77) of them were aware that the college has a mission statement, and of these 93.5% (72) said they knew what the statement said.

The development of the college's core values and the use of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) as a process for strategic planning have links to the school's mission statement. Further, our academic departments and programs undergo the process of program review and learning outcomes assessment, which is administered periodically, requiring that they specifically state how their academic goals and objectives relate to our mission statement, core values, and overall strategic plans. As part of their assessment and planning process, clear links with the college's mission statement, core values, and academic planning and activities must be demonstrated.

Appraisal

Over the past few years, the college has embarked on a number of planning efforts that have resulted in specific steps taken to improve the quality of our institution, the education and services provided, with the mission statement as context but not as the chief road map.

One of the outcomes from the college's planning processes has been the development of a series of core values. Although these

core values were not necessarily developed with our mission statement as the driving force, they nonetheless do capture some of its key elements. The core values specifically are:

- Student Engagement
- Collaboration
- Personal and Professional Growth
- Respect
- Diversity
- Access and Opportunity
- Excellence

These core values were developed in 2006 in tandem with a strategic plan using Appreciative Inquiry (AI) as a planning process. AI is a strengths-based philosophy, founded on the belief that institutions flourish when focused on best practices, achievements, and "moments of excellence."

In the fall of 2006 the AI Planning Committee was formed, comprised of faculty, staff, students, administrators, and trustees. Over 150 appreciative interviews, to seek input and comments from throughout the college community and external stakeholders, were conducted. In May of 2007, the planning process culminated in an Appreciative Inquiry Summit, which drew 170 faculty, students, administrators, and community members. This summit identified and discussed the college's strengths and capacities, and helped forge a new strategic direction designed to advance the college and maximize its potential over the next three years. It did not, however, address the mission statement.

The college's strategic plan, therefore, reflects the voices of those who participated throughout the process and provides a framework within which departments and offices realistically develop major operational goals, objectives, and benchmarks that assess progress and chart a clear course of action for the college's future. The college's leadership recognizes that a necessary next step is to revisit the mission statement.

Institutional Effectiveness

The college regularly engages in planning and visioning activities involving every segment of the campus community. The result of these activities is strategic plans, academic plans, and specific area functional plans that are ultimately rooted in our mission statement, drive the allocation of resources, and improve institutional effectiveness. However, while the college's mission statement is regularly featured in publications and planning documents and activities, and includes important and current features of our core purposes; we have not reexamined this statement in several years. More frequent evaluation of our mission and purposes would improve the institution's effectiveness.

Projection

- As part of its next strategic planning process, the college community will reassess and develop a new mission statement within the next two years that reflects the college's commitments, goals, objectives, constituent needs, and abilities to deliver on these realistically.
- Accordingly, the core values will also be reviewed to make sure they reflect the new mission statement.

STANDARD 2: PLANNING AND EVALUATION

Strengths	Challenges
Well-guided and highly competent leadership at all levels	Resources (staff and time) stretched thin
Appreciative Inquiry	Communicating the results of planning
Process Management	

Description

In both the planning and evaluation of its activities, the college has taken great strides in the last ten years. Planning is more structured and evaluation more solidly based than before. The planning and evaluation processes themselves have been transformed to become more broadly participatory, involving all segments of the college and external community, and more integrated, often involving different segments of the college in the solution of problems. While it is true that there are still challenges in the planning and evaluation processes, it is also true that the members of the college community are better trained than they have ever been in these processes and more proactive in their use.

Northern Essex Community College's (NECC's) current planning process flows from the college's 2008 -2011 strategic plan. The strategic plan is guided by three major initiatives:

- Our Strategic Directions: To Engage Students as Active Learners; Be the First and Best Resource for the Community; Support Leadership at Every Level; Embrace Diversity and Strive for Educational Excellence
- Our Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): Transition & Developmental Course Completion Rates; Gatekeeper Course Completion Rates; Retention; Degrees & Certificates Conferred and Diversity of Staff and Faculty
- Our Achieving the Dream (ATD) goals: Successfully complete developmental courses and progress to credit bearing courses; Enroll in and successfully complete gatekeeper courses; Complete the courses they take with a grade of C or better; Re-enroll from one semester to the next; and Earn certificates and degrees

As is evident in all three planning efforts, student success and diversity are our primary goals. In order to understand and explain this planning at the college more fully, the primary managers at the college were surveyed and interviewed as background for this chapter. The results of those surveys and interviews are found in Exhibits 2-01 to 2-30.

Generally speaking, of course, all college planning begins at the presidential level. In fact, President David Hartleb identifies planning and budgeting as the primary tasks of his office. It is his responsibility to ensure that the college is focused on the future and that it always has a strategic plan in place. President Hartleb works closely with the Executive Committee of the All College Assembly to develop this strategic plan. A number of factors are taken into consideration in the development of that plan. The shape of the current plan for 2008-2011 emerged in May of 2007 from an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) process conducted in an AI Summit involving faculty, staff, administrators and students. To supplement that work, the research of the Office of Institutional Research, the work of the ATD teams, the results from different process management teams and various other data are considered.

No planning is done without data. The function of the strategic plan, as the president sees it, is to set the direction for the college, not to establish specific goals. That task is left to the individual major areas and their units. Academic Affairs, Administration & Finance, Institutional Advancement, Information Technology, Institutional Research, Workforce Development, Human Resources, Staff Development and Enrollment Management and Student Services, participate in the annual planning process. To strengthen the process, the president has asked each division of the college to identify connections to the major initiatives. The intent is to show the interrelationships between the three major planning efforts at the college.

The president expects that members of his cabinet will use the strategic plan as the basis for their own goal setting. The divisions are asked to state their own strategic initiatives and operational goals for the year, supported by more specific indicators and baseline data if available. Specific outcome measures/targets are requested, in order to determine if the goals are met.

The president reviews the plans with the vice presidents and deans and makes adjustments where necessary. The plans are then posted to the college's website for the college community to review. The president's cabinet discusses the plans at an annual retreat. Resources are then allocated to the various departments based on how requests fit the overall plan. In the following year the divisions are asked to complete the process by providing final results for each indicator.

The area of Academic Affairs, headed by the Vice President of Academic Affairs, has several divisions: Humanities and Social Sciences; Business, Math, science, and Technology; Health Professions; Law, Education and Social Professions; Instructional and Student Support; and Workforce Development and Community Education, each headed by a dean (Exhibit 2-02 Interview_AcademicAffairs_Glenn.pdf). The heads of these divisions, their assistant deans, and others form the Academic Affairs Leadership Team.

Long-term planning and evaluation in Academic Affairs are accomplished largely through the Academic Master Plan (AMP) (Exhibit 2-03 Survey__AMP_Grondine), which was developed through a process built on the work of the 2007 AI Summit. During each year of the plan's implementation, committees of staff and faculty are organized around specific charters of work related to goals in

the plan. As an example, one recent charter focused on the development of a statement of core academic skills that was approved by the college community at an All College Assembly meeting in the spring of 2009.

In academic affairs, planning and the allocation of resources is also informed by the program review and outcomes assessment processes, led by an assistant dean for these functions (Exhibit 2-34 Interview Program Review and Assessment Wentland.)

Major initiatives in the academic affairs area are monitored at AMP steering committee meetings and at Academic Affairs Leadership Team meetings. Monitoring and evaluation always involve data gathering, which is done at the beginning of planning processes and later for assessment purposes. The data vary by initiative, but very often relate to student success (retention, persistence, and graduation) and may be disaggregated by various student descriptors (age, gender, and race/ethnicity). The area relies on data already available from or collected by the Office of Institutional Research and Planning and increasingly on data produced by the ATD teams.

The Vice President of Administration and Finance oversees the areas of Facilities and Grounds, Accounting, Financial Planning and Analysis, and the Bursar's Office (Exhibit 2-04 Interview AdminandFinance Wolfe). The strategic plan is the basis for short-term decision-making in the area of facilities and grounds. Long-term planning in that area is driven by the college's campus master plan (Exhibit 2-30 Survey Admin and Finance BuildingsandGrounds Clarke), which was developed with assistance from the State of Massachusetts Department of Capital Asset Management (DCAM). There is an abundance of data on which to base decisions - systems information, maintenance records, and space studies, for example.

Other areas supervised by the Vice President of Administration and Finance are focused on shorter-term tactical planning, including bringing the college in line with best practices in the use of technology and current business processes. Longer-term strategic planning is closely tied to efforts currently underway by the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (MDHE) and the Executive Office of Education around collaboration and efficiency. Accounting and Finance is also responsible for implementing a number of state regulations which also guide planning efforts in that area.

Enrollment Management and Student Services (EMSS) is structured with a first line of managers who head various departments in the area: Student Life, Marketing Communications, Enrollment Services, Learning Accommodations, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, and the various services at the Lawrence campus (Exhibit 2-06 EMSS and Exhibit Hard Copy 2- EMSS binder.) Strategic goals, aligned with the strategic directions of the college (Exhibit 2-07 EMSS 2009 strategic directions and Exhibit 2-08 IT 2009 Strategic Directions), are set at an annual retreat of the first line administrators, and then leadership meetings occur every two weeks to check on progress in the several departments (Exhibit 2-09 EMSS leadership team meeting updates.) In the various units, supervisors encourage individual members to set operational goals that help to implement the strategic goals (Exhibit 2-10 EMSS operational plan.)

Divisional strategic plans are shared with all employees, and managers share all they learn from the executive vice president in their departmental staff meetings. Data are gathered within the department and analyzed at the end of every business cycle or in between if problems arise. In some cases, consultants are hired to

help with projects in the division. Community College Leadership Academy (CCLA) projects are also used to encourage participants to evaluate services against best practices and to recommend changes.

The Office of Faculty and Staff Development is an area largely run by one administrator, one administrative staff person, and recently, a faculty fellow (Exhibit 2-11 Interview_ProfDev_Kamber). It plans, offers and evaluates various professional development programs for faculty and staff--both full-time and adjunct--and helps to develop such projects as the Learning Communities initiative, and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning project.

The Office of Institutional Advancement (Exhibit 2-28 Interview_Institutional Advancement_Poth) plays a role in planning by supplementing state funding with public sector and private sector grants and donations to the college. It also develops partnerships with the community. Directed by the Vice President of Institutional Advancement, this unit funds student scholarships as well as projects suggested by faculty and staff from other areas of the college (Exhibit 2- 1 Hard Copy 2 Institutional Advancement Reference Manual).

Finally, the Office of Institutional Research, headed by a dean, has taken on an increasingly significant role at the college by not only providing relevant data to evaluate institutional effectiveness, but also, primarily through the ATD project, by taking on a proactive role in devising research projects with faculty members, staff and administrators to investigate significant issues at the college.

From time to time, planning issues may arise that require the expertise of several areas of the college to resolve. In this instance, college-wide Process Management teams of faculty, staff, administrators, and students may be formed to research the issue, collect relevant data, evaluate the data and make decisions. An example of such a team is the one that researched the usefulness of the college's system of shuttle buses between the Haverhill and Lawrence campuses. This team included the president, the vice president and a staff assistant from institutional advancement, the director of student engagement, the ESL curriculum coordinator, and a student in the accounting program.

Meetings of the president's cabinet are the chief vehicle for communication of goals set at the level of the president and the cabinet members. Depending on the goal, however, broadcast e-mail, website and paper communications may be used to reach to a much wider audience, or college-wide meetings such as those of the All College Assembly or convocation may be used for disseminating information. For example, in planning for the current budget crisis, the president held a series of focus groups and also provided an opportunity for college employees to post ideas on a blog. The information technology area hopes to utilize a newly created Information Technology Committee (with representatives of various areas of the college) to both gather and disseminate information in the future.

Appraisal

Several themes have emerged from the examination of the planning and evaluation process at the college:

There is a great deal more formal planning going on than at any time in the recent past.

- New tools such as the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) model and Process Management (PM) have contributed to that process.

- While important gains have been made in the area of long-term planning, our resource environment still restricts some areas to more short-term planning activities.
- Effective communication and coordination of plans is challenging, particularly in an environment where a lot of planning is happening and many new initiatives are emerging.
- The pressures of available time and personnel resources continue to challenge some planning efforts.
- The evaluation of the various planning processes, the resulting plans, and the evaluation of data used in these processes can still be improved.

Using a systematic planning process like AI to develop the current strategic plan was effective. This process created a significant amount of college-wide buy-in for the core values and the five *Strategic Directions* which emerged at the end. Every segment of the college uses the strategic plan as the basis for setting its own goals and for justifying its major expenditures.

Every area attempts to make the planning process broad-based. The Academic Master Plan is a good example. Like the strategic plan, the development of the AMP involved wide participation of the college community and serves to guide many of the activities of the Academic Affairs segment of the college. In other areas, planning includes, at a minimum, the division head and those that report to him/her with the results disseminated to other members of the unit. Small units, such as Institutional Advancement, include all members in the planning process.

Most plans at the college are developed for one to three year time periods. In the area of facilities management, however, five and ten year plans were developed with assistance from an outside consulting firm commissioned by the Division of Capital Asset Management (DCAM) and the Department of Higher Education. The resulting plans are regularly updated and are being mostly implemented on schedule.

Although each area of the college is working very diligently to create well-formed plans, communication and coordination of those plans is often challenging. Each member of the president's cabinet, those most responsible for planning at the college, shares plans at cabinet meetings and typically with the people who report to them. However, the details of these plans do not always effectively reach others who may be interested or involved in the outcomes.

Even when information is readily available, discussed in staff meetings, distributed electronically, and posted to public web pages, it can be difficult to catch the attention of busy faculty and staff amidst the many planning activities and new initiatives underway.

As noted earlier, the instability of the budget has left some areas short-staffed, overworked, and with insufficient resources to implement some of the plans that have been generated. Information Technology, for example, has added several staff members in the last year but still needs more staff to keep up with unexpected needs. The marketing communications department, which manages the website, and IT Department which provides programming services have both experienced turn-over of staff, making the development of a planned new NECC portal slower than anticipated.

There is now an abundance of data, ranging from student surveys and enrollment statistics to a capital asset inventory, which should make future planning more efficient and reliable. All areas

feel that the staff now in place is competent to engage in planning and implementation of new initiatives. The challenge is in freeing up time for them to engage in these processes.

Evaluation of the degree to which plans have been successfully completed is commonly but not always performed. In some areas, Academic Affairs and EMSS, for example, extensive reports generated at the end of the fiscal year identify tasks completed. However, making a more conscious effort to assess the overall success of the strategic plan would be beneficial.

Despite the limitations, many planning efforts have come to fruition. Several of the Academic Master Plan committees have completed their work. Enrollment Management and Student Services has introduced new databases, put several forms online, reorganized the area and established a number of new policies and practices. Administration and Finance has worked diligently to improve financial accountability and increase transparency. Significant software updates have been completed by IT. Thus, many of the short-term planning efforts, at least, have resulted in significant and valuable changes.

Institutional Effectiveness

The college regularly determines the effectiveness of its planning activities at multiple levels. The All-College Assembly Executive Committee initiates and monitors the college's strategic plan, along with the president's cabinet. Organizational areas of the college (e.g., Academic Affairs, Enrollment Management and Student Services, Administration and Finance, etc.) establish goals and objectives within the plan annually. Steering or leadership committees within these areas (e.g., the Academic Master Plan Steering Committee) monitor progress throughout the year. College wide and functional area goals and status updates are shared publicly on the college's website, and the President's cabinet reviews progress annually. Resources are allocated to priority initiatives within college wide and functional area goals.

Projection

- Plans to discuss a new strategic plan will begin in spring 2010 with the All College Assembly Executive Committee.
- Enrollment services will work with academic planning and advising to implement Degree Works, an electronic advising system to improve advising and assist students with their educational goals.
- Administration and Finance will continue to expand customer access to financial data and information.
- The IT area will rely on the input of a newly established IT committee to provide better communication with all segments of the college.

Evaluation

Description

The college evaluates its institutional effectiveness in a variety of ways.

Many academic programs are accredited or approved by outside agencies. (Appendix E1B.)

In addition, all academic programs in the college are on a schedule for a thorough program review process. Many of the programs

have already been reviewed and the remaining programs are slated for review over the next few of years. The reports of these program reviews are publicly available online and/or in the college's library. Regular program review updates publicly describe how the college is "closing the loop" on recommendations. Programs that have completed the program review process are actively assessing program outcomes each year and using the results in their self-studies for accrediting agencies.

An AMP committee recently developed, and the college approved, five core academic skills (communication, global awareness, information literacy, quantitative reasoning, and science and technology) which will apply to all students. Another committee is finalizing the process through which those core academic skills will be assessed. The intent is to assess students at the 45-50 credit level using a portfolio system. The first assessment is scheduled to take place in the spring of 2010.

All departments in EMSS engage in numerous assessments, external reviews, surveys and evaluations of their impact on students. To illustrate their understanding and continual use of assessment, each EMSS department has prepared a recent case study example of how data is gathered and drives subsequent decisions about future change and improvements.

Administration & Finance (financial planning & analysis, accounting, bursar's office and facilities & grounds) is an active participant in statewide system councils and special initiatives. These include the vice president's regular participation in the monthly Community College Chief Financial Officer meetings; the Banner-MA College's executive committee known as the Sungard Massachusetts Advisory Resource Team (SMART), the system facilities strategic planning work group, and the new institutional effectiveness initiative. The objective of all these efforts is to ensure our processes and services in administration and finance reflect best business practices as compared to our MA and national peers.

Starting in January 2010, Administration and Finance will be working toward a sustainable model of institutional effectiveness for their programs. This will include identifying key outcomes and related performance metrics and an annual survey of customers (students, faculty, staff and community users of college facilities). The foundation for this work will be a program developed at Central Piedmont Community College.

Information Technology Services (ITS) uses several external sources to ensure the area is using best practices and utilizing knowledge within the state college system. The chief information officer attends the monthly Massachusetts CIO Council meeting and is also a member of SMART, a collaborative of Massachusetts state colleges using Banner. An outside consulting group has been used each year to evaluate IT priorities across the board and this practice will continue on an annual basis.

Internally ITS seeks feedback through regular department meetings and monthly meetings with divisional vice presidents. ITS has also formed the Information Technology Committee which allows proper communication and review of priorities with staff from across all divisions of the college.

Achieving The Dream is a recent initiative that involves more than one major area of the college. The college received a grant to participate in this national initiative from 2008-2012 (with an implementation grant for planning over FY-2007). The initiative gives seed money to colleges across the US to encourage them to use data as evidence in identifying and devising strategies to help at-risk cohorts of students succeed in college courses and continue

to degree completion. ATD goals have been incorporated into the planning and evaluation cycles of all the major areas of the college, an effect envisioned by the goals of the initiative itself.

An Institutional Effectiveness Committee used to play a role in the collection and interpretation of KPI data (both those required by the MDHE and those deemed useful by the college community itself). This committee has been incorporated into the ATD initiative as its Data Team. Now, each year, the Office of Institutional Research tracks five KPIs for this team: transition & developmental course completion rates, gatekeeper course completion rates, retention, degrees and certificates conferred, and diversity of faculty and staff. Each indicator has a two-year and a four-year goal (Exhibit 2-31 Fall2008_KPI_report.)

The college also participates in the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) every other year. Results of that survey are used to inform many areas of the college including student services, advising, and faculty professional development.

Appraisal

In the academic area, completing a college-wide assessment process for the five core academic skills is a high priority. The pilot assessment of the communication skill in spring of 2010 should provide important feedback both on the ability of the students to communicate in the manner necessary for success and also on the process itself.

Those programs that have gone through external accreditation or approval have fared well and have incorporated recommended changes into their curriculum. A major change in the nursing program curriculum is one example. A number of programs have completed the program review process and are now regularly assessing program outcomes and implementing changes based on review results. An example is the survey of prospective employers recently conducted by the Graphic Design Program in response to issues raised by its program review.

The Achieving the Dream initiative has led to significant improvements in student success, including more students passing "gatekeeper" Math and English courses, higher fall-to-fall retention and the highest overall completion rate in the history of the college.

The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) indicates improvement in such areas as academic challenge, student effort, faculty-student interaction and support for learners. The Achieving the Dream Data Team has worked to improve performance on the KPIs.

Improvement has been seen in several of the KPIs. Students who took developmental courses in fall 2008 exceeded the two and four year goals in every area except math, and the total number of degrees awarded has increased.

While most areas of the college are involved in some kind of assessment of their effectiveness, as described above, some areas are still in the beginning stages of their work, and many processes still need to be fully developed and incorporated into ongoing operations.

Projection

- Programs that have not already gone through the program review process will do so over the next five years.
- Areas revealed by the CCSSE survey which need improvement, such as active and collaborative learning, will be addressed through professional development activities over the next three years.

STANDARD 3: ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNANCE

Strengths	Challenges
Positive Board-President relationship	Complete new Strategic Plan in 2011
Commitment to broad participation in decision-making	Staffing for new building on Lawrence Campus
Strong faculty engagement	Improve effectiveness of All-College Assembly

Description

THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Northern Essex Community College is one of fifteen public community colleges in the Commonwealth, operating under the jurisdiction of the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education (BHE). Locally, the college is governed by the board of trustees (BOT), which receives its "powers and duties" from Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, section 22, and whose members are appointed by the governor, with the exception of one student elected annually by the student body, and one member elected by the Alumni Association (Exhibit Hard Copy 3-1 BOTBy-Laws). Except for the student representative, all appointments are subject to five-year terms, renewable for one additional term. The power of the BOT is to delegate authority to the president to administer and lead the college, establish "those policies necessary for the administrative management of personnel, staff services and the general business of the institution. The board of trustees may delegate to the president of such institution any of the powers and responsibilities herein enumerated." The additional responsibilities and duties of the board are described in the Trustees Orientation Manual distributed to each member at their orientation session (Exhibit Hard Copy 3-2 BOTOrientManual).

Each new trustee meets individually with the president to review the trustee's role and responsibilities and to resolve any questions. The BOT meets monthly, occasionally alternating the venue from the Haverhill campus to the Lawrence campus on Franklin Street or the Louise Haffner Fournier Education Center on Amesbury Street.

Members of the BOT are not compensated for their service, but all reasonable expenses for travel and conferences are reimbursed. Members have available to them the same professional development opportunities as the college's staff and faculty, and are invited to all college student-centered activities or award ceremonies, thereby connecting trustees to students, faculty and staff. These connections are reinforced by BOT members who participates in

NECC's planning activities, such as the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) process that resulted in our 2008-2011 strategic plan, and those who are involved with school processes in other ways, such as serving on the steering committee for our Achieving The Dream Initiative.

PRESIDENT/ADMINISTRATION/STRUCTURE

The President, David Hartleb, is the chief executive officer of the college and reports directly to the BOT. He has been president since 1996, a tenure which includes the college's last NEASC self-study in 2000.

The president administers and leads the college by conferring with a number of decision-making bodies including his senior advisory team, the cabinet. The cabinet includes the Executive Vice President of Enrollment Management and Student Services, the Vice President of Academic Affairs, the Vice President of Administration, the Vice President of Institutional Advancement, the Dean of Institutional Planning and Research, the Dean of Workforce Development and Community Education Services, the Dean of Human Resources, the Dean of Faculty and Staff Development, and the Chief Information Officer. The cabinet members meet with the president as a group twice a month, and individually, once a month. Discussion at these meetings includes proposed policies and their implementation, institutional rules and regulations, budget issues, personnel actions, institutional efficacy, divisional actions, and other mission-related issues.

The leadership team, another advisory group, meets with the president twice per semester to discuss campus-wide issues from an administrative perspective. For example, a recent leadership meeting focused on the college's preparations for the H1N1 virus. This allowed the team to hear preliminary plans and to offer helpful suggestions from a broad spectrum of viewpoints. The leadership team includes cabinet members and the deans from across the college. Members of the cabinet and leadership team communicate regularly with the people they supervise, including associate and assistant deans, directors and coordinators, as well as with groups of faculty in regularly scheduled division and department meetings.

The relationship between the president and the administration is depicted in a flow chart describing the organizational structure, hierarchy of authority, and reporting relationships within the institution. The college's various divisions and departments, are depicted in this chart along with the administrator in charge of the area. This chart is on file in the president's office and in human resources and is periodically updated to reflect organizational and personnel changes.

Faculty, staff and administrators all have an official job description on file in the human resources office. These job descriptions detail the authority, responsibility and the goals and objectives for each position. The American Federation of State, County and Technical Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO Collective Bargaining Agreement (AFSCME) outlines the general work responsibilities for clerical and technical employees. General work responsibilities for faculty and professional staff are outlined in two Massachusetts Community College Council (MCCC)/Massachusetts Teacher Association (MTA) Collective Bargaining Agreements (one for full-time and part-time day faculty and one for part-time Division of Continuing Education (DCE) faculty who teach credit courses. General work responsibilities for administrators and other non-unit professionals are outlined in the Non-Unit Professionals Personnel Policies handbook and in the non-unit classified personnel policies handbook for certain administrative assistants and confidential secretaries.

The Human Resources Department helps to ensure that job descriptions are reviewed and updated on a regular basis by employees and their supervisors in accordance with collective bargaining agreements of the two unions (AFSCME, MCCC/MTA) and with non-unit employee policies. Evaluations are also conducted in all employee areas in accordance with the bargaining unit agreements and non-unit policies. As part of a requirement of the MCCC collective bargaining agreement, representatives from labor and management, including the president, meet once a month to discuss non-contractual issues and to try and resolve them. These meetings provide a helpful avenue for informal communication.

THE ALL COLLEGE ASSEMBLY

The All College Assembly (ACA) plays an important role in facilitating participatory governance at the college. The ACA Charter states, "This charter gives life, on paper, to representative participation by employees in the college community." It further states: "The purpose of the All College Assembly is not to perform administration, but to advise on executive and operating policies both before they are adopted and after implementation."

There are four standing committees of the All College Assembly: The Academic Affairs Committee, the Finance Committee, the Executive Committee for Planning and Policy, and the Student Affairs Committee. Each committee has seats for 13 elected members, including seven faculty, two professional staff, two non-unit professionals and non-unit confidential secretaries, and two clerical/technical and maintenance custodial employees. Standing committees meet on a regular basis throughout the year and the entire ACA meets two to three times a semester.

In general, the purpose of the ACA standing committees is to review and recommend polices. A brief description of each, adapted from the college's website, is outlined below:

- **Executive Committee**: The Executive Committee meets with the president at least twice a semester to discuss ongoing concerns and to establish committee and assembly priorities. When necessary, the committee may establish sub-committees and task forces to address important issues and policy matters not addressed by other standing committees. The Executive Committee oversees ACA meetings, and regularly seeks input from assembly members and from the president on issues of importance.

- **Academic Affairs Committee:** The Academic Affairs Committee makes recommendations to the president regarding proposals for changes, additions and deletions in curricula offered by all divisions of the college. The committee may also make recommendations on college-wide academic policy and standards.

- **Finance Committee:** The Finance Committee makes recommendations to the president with respect to the allocation of funds within the proposed and approved budget of the college (within collective bargaining laws and agreements). The committee accesses budgetary information, as a group, or through its chairperson or designee, necessary to make informed recommendations.

- **Student Affairs Committee:** The Student Affairs Committee makes recommendations in all areas of student life including, but not limited to, recruitment, admissions, orientation, advising, retention, student services, diversity issues, student activities, classroom climate, and student morale.

FACULTY

The faculty at NECC exercises a critical role in ensuring the quality and integrity of our academic programs. Faculty members develop proposals for academic courses and programs and submit these to the All College Assembly's Academic Affairs Committee for approval. This past year, 121 proposals were submitted to the Academic Affairs Committee; 39 new courses, 32 changes, 21 special topics, and 13 inactivations. The committee, consisting of approximately 50% faculty and 50% staff, evaluates, approves and makes changes to courses and programs. Recommendations are then forwarded to the vice president of Academic Affairs and, ultimately, to the president for approval.

The faculty also influences other policies and issues through participation in division and department meetings, and by serving on other college committees, task forces and teams, such as the Diversity Committee, the National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI)team, the Strategic Planning Team, the ATD Team and many others. For example, the Diversity Committee was instrumental in working with human resources to strengthen the minority hiring process. As a result new guidelines for hiring committees were established; all college hiring committees now must include either a Diversity, or National Coalition Building Institute committee member (Exhibit Hard Copy 3-3 SearchCommHandbook). Another example of faculty influence occurred after inclement weather at the end of one fall semester made it difficult to hold make-up exams. As a result of faculty recommendation, a change was made to the fall exam schedule to ensure enough make-up dates in the event of school closings.

STUDENTS

Students have a number of different opportunities to have their voices heard. Every year students elect a Student Senate that represents students' views on various issues and areas of concern. Each year students elect a student representative to the BOT. Students can also provide input through the student newspaper (The Observer), clubs and organizations, suggestion boxes, faculty evaluations, the Student Leadership Development Program, and as Presidential Student Ambassadors. In addition, informal discussions with students provide faculty and staff with critical and candid student input about the college and the student experience here.

All students receive the Student Policy Handbook when they register. This includes a chart, "Process and Contacts for Resolving Complaints," which directs students to the appropriate personnel for expressing their concerns, complaints and suggestions. The handbook is also posted on the NECC website. The Executive Vice President of Enrollment Management and Student Services (EMSS) reviews any concerns along with managers on both the Lawrence and Haverhill campuses in a "debriefing process" to ensure that the concern has been properly and efficiently addressed. In recent years student input has been actively sought through *ad hoc* meetings and focus groups on issues such as the new Smoke Free Environment policy, the ATD project and the NEASC accreditation study.

CAMPUS SYSTEM

NECC functions as one centralized system with three sites in three cities located approximately 10-13 miles apart from each other. These sites are commonly referred to as the "Haverhill campus", the "Lawrence campus", and the "North Andover site." The Lawrence campus consists of two buildings located in close proximity to one another on two different streets (Franklin Street and Amesbury Street). The North Andover site is considered a satellite site.

The executive vice president is designated by the president of the college to be responsible for all day-to-day functions and operations at the Lawrence campus. Over the past six years the services for students on the Lawrence campus have been brought to a commensurate level with the Haverhill campus. The executive vice president is the chief operating officer for the Lawrence campus and also manages the outreach program in Lawrence and EMSS on both the Haverhill and Lawrence campuses.

Reporting directly to the president, the Vice President of Administration and Finance is responsible for the day-to-day facilities of the Haverhill campus including four key areas: accounting and finance planning & analysis, the bursar's office, event planning, and facilities and grounds. The vice president of finance and the executive vice president both have supervisors and staff designated to cover their responsibilities if they are absent or off-campus.

The Vice President of Academic Affairs oversees the academic arena at all three locations. All academic programs, including credit, day and evening courses, and non-credit offerings, are administered the same way on both campuses and all off campus locations, and follow the same organizational structure (Academic Affairs Organization Chart).

The Vice President of Academic Affairs is also responsible for Distance Education at NECC. Courses are developed and scheduled through each academic division. To facilitate distance learning, we are a member of the Massachusetts Colleges Online (MCO) consortium, a collaborative of the 15 community colleges and nine state colleges, which offers over 500 online courses and programs. MCO allows students the opportunity to take distance education classes from various institutions in the consortium to attain a degree at their home institution.

Appraisal

THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The college's BOT operates effectively and maintains a positive and productive relationship with the president. At the BOT's self-assessment retreat in May 2009, trustees' comments about their board interaction included how well they "operate as a team," one with "shared goals" and "no private agendas." Members also commented that they "know what to expect," are "comfortable about asking questions," and have a "comfortable working atmosphere."

During a September 2009 interview with three trustees, one of whom is the student trustee, interviewees focused on the self-assessment tool, which the board had developed last year. Summative results indicate that overall the trustees ranked *all* areas of functioning in the highest two categories (strongly agree and agree) on a five point Likert scale. The areas leaning more toward "agree," include giving the board members an even clearer description of their roles and responsibilities, deepening their understanding of the financial audit and its recommendations, and specifying methods of avoiding conflicts of interest or the perception thereof. Board members awarded extremely high scores in reference to a "climate of mutual trust and respect" existing between the board and CEO, the board's effective evaluation of the CEO, how well the "board and CEO work cooperatively to maintain a broad perspective," and how well "board members work together as a team to accomplish the work of the board." In an opportunity to express opinions in an open-ended format, members continued to comment on the high quality of leadership at the college, the teamwork, and integrity of the board.

During the self-assessment and in interviews, board members

commented on how much they enjoyed the academic reports that are part of each monthly meeting, and how those reports helped them feel more connected to what was happening at the college. As mentioned earlier, connectedness has also been reinforced by the board's involvement in the AI approach to creating our latest strategic plan, which provided an opportunity to interact with staff, faculty and community stakeholders. One trustee described the AI planning as "eye-opening," particularly in terms of being able "to witness the energy and optimism of all involved," and "to learn in-depth about more that's going on in the college."

Two of the trustees interviewed are members of the college's ATD Core Team, which allows for direct participation in our process of developing an even stronger evidence-based decision-making culture, and gives them a front row seat in the conversations around policy and programming improvements. These trustees bring that information and enthusiasm back to the full board, and gain greater understanding of how their governance and the president's leadership combine for success.

Ultimately, the only concerns members expressed during their self-assessment and their interviews centered on the external forces of budget cuts and policy formation at the level of the BHE.

PRESIDENT/ADMINISTRATION/STRUCTURE

Participatory governance remains an important goal of the college. As in most large organizations, the actual structure of the college is hierarchical. However, the consistent commitment to broad participation in decision-making over the past ten years has leveled the hierarchy and fostered the development of a culture of involvement.

There has been improvement over the past several years in the extent to which decision-making has become more transparent and important information less concentrated at the top. There is wide recognition that a serious effort is being made to create a more democratic organization with open communication and shared decision making. For example, in addition to the formal channels of communication, there have been several new initiatives at the college in recent years which have further facilitated participatory governance. The first is Process Management (PM), implemented at the college in 2004. PM is an initiative developed to foster continuous improvement and solve organizational problems from the ground up. PM teams made up of personnel from across the college have been formed to address specific problems and propose specific, workable solutions that can then be implemented. These teams have recommended reconfiguration of the library, a method for events planning and scheduling, and the development of a freshman seminar, to name just a few. One example of a successful PM effort is the project focused on the future of the library. As a result of the research conducted and recommendations made in this project, the first floor of the college's Bentley Library is currently being renovated to create an Information Commons that will more effectively serve the needs of today's students. A list of the 29 PM efforts is located on the college website. Process Management has had a powerful impact at NECC. It has facilitated college involvement in decision-making and fostered collaboration across divisions, while improving institutional effectiveness.

Another new initiative that has fostered participation as well as institutional growth and efficacy is the NECC Leadership Academy implemented in 2008-09. The philosophy of the academy asserts:

The NECC Community College Leadership Academy embraces and embodies the view that leadership is a skill that all members of our community can develop through study, self-reflection, and shared learning.

And it believes that NECC thrives when constituents at every level take ownership of its mission and responsibility for its success.

Five members of the college community participated in the first year of the program and eight are enrolled for the second year. This year long program culminates in a presentation by each participant of his/her leadership project, a self-designed effort to contribute to a department or division goal or need. The college also participates in another leadership program that has encouraged broader participation in decision-making, the Massachusetts Community College Leadership Academy (CCLA). Every year two college employees embark on a year of leadership training with participants from the 14 other community colleges. Each participant develops and implements a project that in some way makes a contribution to institutional effectiveness. This professional development program helps to encourage leadership and professional growth within institutions and helps to support the future of community colleges overall.

The college's strategic plan has become a focal point for community involvement in recent years, and has been critical to institutional improvement. In 2007 another new initiative, Appreciative Inquiry (AI) was used to facilitate this important planning process. AI is an approach to organizational change grounded in the philosophy that positive change occurs when we start with what is right, rather than what is wrong, and focus on what we want more of, rather than what we need to fix. In a two day summit open to the entire college community, 170 NECC stakeholders engaged in a conversation, and an inquiry into what we do really well at NECC. The results, derived from real experiences gathered in interviews, were used to develop the college's 2008-2011 strategic plan.

In addition to these initiatives, meetings are held on an *ad hoc* basis to ensure the college community has an opportunity to provide feedback to the president on important issues. For example, the president scheduled several open meetings seeking input from the college community about how best to address the fiscal challenges of FY-2008/09 and beyond. During these meetings, as well as via e-mail, he explained the details of the current budget situation and solicited input around cost saving and entrepreneurial ideas. The feedback from these meetings was recorded and then used as the agenda for the next cabinet meeting.

These programs and *ad hoc* meetings have helped to make NECC a learning institution, where employees and students grow in a process of continuous improvement that promotes institutional excellence. These efforts have, collectively, helped to create a culture of participation that has shaped the college in recent years. This culture shift would not have been possible without leadership committed to democratic governance and institutional growth, organizations such as the All College Assembly, and departments like the Teaching and Learning Center that work to make it possible.

Despite the positive impact of these initiatives, the effort to ensure everyone is involved and has a voice is not perfect. Some constituent groups are more involved than others, and information flows more freely in some areas of the college than in others. There is also the challenge of information overload; with so much going on at once, it is often difficult for faculty and staff to keep up with the status of various projects and meetings while attending to everyday business. However, despite these challenges, it is very clear the college has made significant steps toward becoming a more open, inclusive institution, the effectiveness of which is born out in a culture of continuous improvement, and most notably, in the success of our students, as seen in the results of our Achieving The Dream work.

ALL COLLEGE ASSEMBLY

In the fall of 2008, the College Advisory Council, in an effort to clarify its role and to communicate to the college community each member's stake in the council, recommended a name change which was voted into effect. The College Advisory Council is now referred to as the All College Assembly (ACA). Attendance at assembly meetings has consistently been above the necessary 10% of full-time employees (approximately 47 people) required to hold a meeting. In recent years faculty attendance has increased as well. Whether or not this is due to the content of meetings (i.e. security on campus, budget, NEASC, etc.), or simply a new found interest in the All College Assembly, remains unknown. Whatever the case, the increased attendance is a welcome improvement that bolsters the ACA and its ability to share information and address constituent concerns.

The standing committees of the ACA exhibit varying levels of involvement in college decision-making. The Executive Committee is most heavily involved in and connected to major initiatives at the college such as our most recent strategic plan, and Process Management. The Academic Affairs Committee was heavily involved in the Academic Master Plan, and the Finance Committee has extensive contact with cabinet members, including the Vice President of Administration and Finance, as well as access to budget information. The extensive involvement of these three committees has fostered increased openness and transparency in governance. On the other hand, the Student Affairs Committee has been faced with challenges with its purpose, its connection to college planning, and with engaging its members and others in its work.

For many years, the charter of the ACA has included two student seats for each of the standing committees. However, those seats were eliminated several years ago due to challenges keeping them filled with students. In response, new avenues for student input have been sought. For example, students have been represented in several major initiatives over the past five years, such as serving as members of the ATD Core Team and participating in several ATD focus groups; they have also participated in strategic planning and in NEASC training meetings. As part of the college Shuttle Process Management team, students worked to develop a more effective shuttle system. The Student Affairs Committee was re-established in 2004, in part, to address student-related issues and to provide an avenue for student recommendations and concerns. This past year the Executive Committee of the ACA initiated informal efforts to re-institute student involvement on ACA committees.

Another area of concern is some disconnect between the Executive Committee and the other standing committees; despite what appears to be improved attendance, many people on campus are not aware the All College Assembly exists, or have no idea about what it does.

FACULTY

The new Vice President of Academic Affairs, hired in 2007, has had a substantial impact on the culture of openness at the college. His leadership style has been characterized by an open door approach that has improved morale, increased involvement and facilitated the feeling of trust in work relationships. For example, he sought the assistance of the Academic Affairs Committee when determining academic policy, and there is increased participation by faculty in several initiatives including the Academic Master Plan and faculty hiring committees.

One of the most significant changes in recent years has been the increase of full-time faculty on campus. While there has been

strong interest in hiring more full-time faculty at the college for many years, this became an institutional priority in 2007 when the cabinet approved a formal proposal to increase the percentage of courses taught by full-time faculty. Support for this endeavor came from recent research showing retention and graduation rates are higher, curriculum is stronger and advising more effective when the percentage of full-time faculty is higher.

The original plan was to move from 93 to 113 full-time faculty over a three year period, and to increase the percentage of daytime courses by full-time faculty from 53% in 2007 to 65% in 2010. By the fall of 2009 the college had 111 full-time faculty—nearly reaching our goal—and 60% of daytime courses were taught by full-time faculty. As important as these accomplishments have been, it is equally important to note that faculty were instrumental in writing the original proposal and continue to be a critical part of subsequent hiring committees. Moreover, while the initial impetus to hire more full-time faculty stemmed from a desire to improve student success, this increase, and the accomplishment of these goals, have had an important positive effect on faculty morale and feelings of efficacy.

The profound impact of new leadership in academic affairs, and the accomplishment of the long hoped for increase in full-time faculty notwithstanding, there remain some concerns around faculty involvement in certain aspects of college governance. One ongoing concern related to faculty involvement is that while faculty members comprise slightly more than half of the seats on the ACA Committees, it is often the case that there are vacant faculty seats, both regular and alternate. These vacancies may be due to in part to other commitments and involvement in other committee work, and the fact that there are so many new initiatives at the college. Another ongoing concern is the challenge of engaging adjunct faculty, who are a significant portion of faculty on campus, on committees and in major initiatives.

STUDENTS

The president of the college provides the opportunity for students to have a voice when it comes to college-wide decisions that may impact their lives on the campus. For example, in the fall of 2009, NECC became a smoke-free campus; smoking is only allowed in individuals' vehicles. When considering this policy, the president presented several venues for students and others to share their opinions. The open-forums were advertised widely and those who could not attend were encouraged to contact the president via e-mail or phone. Students have also been involved in ATD focus groups, strategic planning meetings, and the NEASC accreditation study.

In response to the NEASC five year report which expressed concern about student involvement in governance, administrators worked with students to brainstorm ways to re-invigorate the Student Senate and increase participation. As a result, in 2004, students voted on several changes to the Student Senate By-Laws to create an organizational structure that would enable more students to participate, and encourage more involvement. These changes have had the intended effect. Student participation in the Student Senate has grown significantly over the past five years. In 2003-04 there were twelve students serving on the Senate; since that time the number of students has grown to 19, 22, 23, 20, and 20 in each of the past five years.

Currently, as part of the 2009 Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) supplemental questions, participating students were asked to indicate if NECC "provides opportunities for students to share their views and have a voice in college policies

and decisions that directly concern them." Twenty-three percent strongly agreed, 37% agreed and 35% were neutral while 4% disagreed and 2% strongly disagreed.

Despite the increased opportunity for student involvement in recent years, and the growth of the student senate, there is some concern that students still are not heard from enough, that some venues are more effective than others, and that there should be more autonomy in student organizations. In an effort to maintain contact with students regarding their concerns and issues, the Student Affairs Committee agreed to send their chairperson to the college's student senate meetings on a regular basis. Despite good intentions, this has not occurred as planned; however, there is a continued commitment to this endeavor.

CAMPUS SYSTEM

Within the past few years, a new Vice President of Academic Affairs and a new Vice President of Administration and Finance have been hired by the college. Both new vice presidents have brought new ideas and fresh perspectives.

Institutional Effectiveness

The effectiveness of the college's organizational structure and system of governance can ultimately be measured by the extent to which the culture "in practice" mirrors institutional values and facilitates the achievement of institutional goals. And, it is best gleaned from observing it "as a process," an ongoing pursuit of excellence to further student success.

With this in mind, the college assesses the effectiveness of, and makes necessary changes to, its organizational structure and system of governance as a regular feature of its planning processes. As described in standard 2 and elsewhere in this self-study, every few years the college develops a strategic plan that sets the framework for determining operational goals. The college also has an Achieving the Dream Data Team charged with ensuring that the college's 5 Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) are monitored for improvement each year. Working with his administration, the president is responsible for ensuring that the strategic plan is implemented, for evaluating the extent to which it is achieved, and for deciding whether changes to organizational structure and governance must occur.

Through this process of planning, implementing and evaluating, the president is able to measure institutional efficacy on an annual basis. The strategic plan for 2008-11 and the KPI Report for 2009 are available on the college website, along with indications of organizational changes that have been made to facilitate the implementation of college goals.

Projection

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Periodically, but no less than every five years, the board of trustees will assess its effectiveness. The board members will examine its performance against:

- The appropriate sections of Standard Three of the current NEASC Standards for Accreditation; and,
- The Guides to Trustee Roles and Responsibilities from the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT); and,
- The Guide to Ethical Governance from the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT); and

- The Massachusetts Public Education Nominating Council (PENC) Statement of Commitment and Responsibilities for Massachusetts Public College and University Board of Trustees; and,
- The Commonwealth of Massachusetts statutory authority and obligation for public higher education trustees (found in the President's and Trustees Legal Resource Manual – periodically updated by the Office of the General Counsel of the Massachusetts Community Colleges).

This examination will normally be done with a survey instrument developed by the Board along with a retreat to discuss the findings of the survey.

PRESIDENT/ADMINISTRATION/STRUCTURE

- The Executive Committee of the All-College Assembly will begin discussion of a new strategic planning process with the President in spring 2010.

ALL COLLEGE ASSEMBLY

- The All College Assembly will devise systems and tools to more formally assess accomplishments and effectiveness during 2010-2011.
- The All College Assembly will work to increase attendance at meetings and involvement in committees.

STUDENTS

- Feedback from students about "having a voice" at the college will continue to be collected in future CCSSE surveys.
- Student representatives will be sought on a trial basis for the All College Assembly standing committees in 2010-2011.
- Club advisors will be invited to get more involved with the student senate in an effort to create more open communication.
- Administration and Finance will explore ways for students to provide input and feedback on administrative services.
- The student senate will be given greater autonomy by allowing them to set their own agendas.

FACULTY AND CAMPUS SYSTEM

- Hiring full-time faculty will remain a priority at the college and in Academic Affairs, especially in light of increased enrollments. We will continue toward our goal of 65% of daytime courses taught by full-time faculty.

STANDARD 4: THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM

Strengths	Challenges
Broad participation in academic initiatives and oversight	Prioritize new initiatives to reduce institutional (faculty/staff) workload
Strong Program Review and Outcomes Assessment Process	Increase staff support for Program Review and Outcomes Assessment work
Identified Core Academic Skills	Develop Career Pathways to improve student transitions from basic education through degrees and certifications

Description

Northern Essex Community College (NECC) continues to offer a variety of associate degrees in science and arts, as well as a wide array of certificates, in keeping with its mission "to serve people of the Merrimack Valley as a caring and comprehensive center of educational excellence." The college offers fifty two programs leading to an Associate of Arts (AA) or Associate of Science (AS) degree and three options for the Associate of Applied Science degree. In addition, NECC offers twenty-nine certificate programs. Associate degree programs carry a minimum of 60 credits and follow a required or recommended sequence of courses. Certificate requirements vary by program and follow a recommended course sequence requiring from 12 to 50 credits. Courses are offered year-round. All courses meet the same standards and requirements regardless of mode of delivery. Course offerings and descriptions are found online in the Academic Catalog.

Our academic programs continue to evolve under the oversight of the Academic Affairs Committee, which makes curriculum recommendations to the president regarding all proposals for changes, additions, and deletions, and recommends changes in college-wide academic policy and standards. In keeping with our tradition of change, however, academic oversight is now also guided by an inclusive Academic Master Planning Committee, and informed by a thorough program review process that all academic programs must complete. This master planning and program review process reflects a larger cultural change at the college whereby decisions are made by a larger community of stakeholders and informed by data that is publicly available.

Each program's learning goals and requirements are published in the academic catalog. In addition, current descriptions for all programs of study are published online on the NECC website, ensuring that the most current information is available to current and prospective students. New programs are thoroughly researched and must fulfill a bona fide community need before being formally proposed to the Academic Affairs Committee for implementation. Before full implementation, new programs must also be approved by the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE), which has a separate program approval process that considers such criteria as occupational outlook, program cost, and whether other colleges in the state are already offering similar programs.

If a program's requirements change or if a program is eliminated, the college makes provisions for affected students. A flowchart, Process for Inactivating or Reactivating a Program, details the procedures followed, and the form for program coordinators to submit to the Academic Affairs Committee is available on the course/program development web page.

UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAMS

The undergraduate experience at NECC demonstrates the college's commitment to "engage students as active learners" as they progress through their degree or certificate programs. These programs are designed so that students develop the knowledge, skill, abilities and appreciation that the college has determined are essential to each field of inquiry. Students attaining a degree or certificate progress through a course sequence clearly defined in the college's academic catalog and on the Programs of Study Site Map website. The foundation for each degree program includes at least 20 credits of general education classes, although most programs require more. These classes introduce students to a variety of ways of understanding the world while preparing them for more specialized classes within their chosen programs. The courses within the student's major or concentration usually account for 24 to 40 credits towards the completion of a degree; most include at least three or four elective choices, although these choices are often restricted to areas related to the major or concentration. These classes afford our students a solid introduction to one disciplinary area and ensure that our graduates are prepared to transfer to senior institutions or for entry level employment in the communities we serve.

The primary transfer associate degree programs are liberal arts, business transfer, and engineering science. As noted on page 45 of the 2007-2008 academic catalog. "These programs are parallel to the first two years of similar programs in most public and private senior colleges throughout the country and provide a solid basis for transfer with advanced standing." (Exhibit Hard Copy 4-1 Acad Cat) The college's eight career Associate Degree programs and all of the certificate programs are intended to provide the theory and technical knowledge to develop the professional skills students need to qualify for entry into the job market immediately after graduation. Many of these programs include practicum experiences while others may be supplemented with cooperative education courses for on-the-job training. Individual courses within these programs may have transfer potential into related degrees at senior colleges. With some additional courses, students in career programs may also transfer to four-year institutions.

The college's newest program, the Associate in Applied Science degree program in Laboratory Science, illustrates our commitment to rigorous integrated academic programs that address the needs

of the students and the communities we serve. Science faculty noted the lack of minority and ESL students participating in the sciences, despite NECC's status as one of only two Hispanic Serving Institutions in Massachusetts, and initiated a project to rectify that imbalance. After a series of community and college surveys, they determined a need for a new applied science program that would provide two outcomes: transfer to a four-year institution and entry into the workforce.

In July 2008, the faculty were awarded a National Science Foundation Advanced Technological Education (NSF-ATE) grant that provided funding for curriculum development and start-up equipment, and allowed faculty to move ahead with the program. Curriculum planning involved several steps including NECC's Academic Affairs Committee approval process, and the Commonwealth's Department of Higher Education (DHE) approval process. The science faculty designed a program and courses that met those requirements as well as many of the requirements for transfer to four-year institutions.

General Education

NECC's course framework for general education remains driven by the 1990 Massachusetts Transfer Compact, an agreement that affords Massachusetts community college graduates guaranteed admission and a full transfer of credits towards a bachelors degree at state four year institutions if certain GPA and minimum general education core class requirements are met. As a member of this compact, NECC works with all transferring students to complete 6 credit hours of English composition, 9 credit hours of behavioral and social sciences, 9 credit hours of humanities and fine arts, 8 credit hours of natural or physical science and 3 credit hours of mathematics. Under these guidelines, students are exposed in a balanced manner to the modes of inquiry within the traditional fields of higher education.

Students attaining a degree from NECC are required to pass ENG101 and ENG102, ensuring that they demonstrate collegiate-level skills in the English language. The Department of Developmental Studies offers coursework and tutoring for students who are identified through the assessment testing process as needing skills development in English (reading, writing, and English as a Second Language) and math prior to enrolling in most college-level courses. The Academic Resource and Tutoring Center (ARTC) provides professional and peer tutoring for students in college-level courses, including ENG101 and 102.

Students' understanding of current information resources and technology begins with a required research essay in ENG101; computer and technology fluency is addressed by the college's computer fluency requirement. The math proficiency required for Associate Degree programs ensures that students attain an appropriate grounding in quantitative literacy. The math requirement for certificate programs reflects the needs of the coursework and industry. The new college-level math lab, an outgrowth of the ARTC and the increasing need for math tutoring, provides drop-in tutoring for all college-level math courses.

While the course framework for the general education requirement remains restricted by the transfer compact, the underlying pedagogy and curriculum in these courses is undergoing a radical but methodical change. In 2002, the college had agreed to three general education competencies: writing, critical thinking, and computer fluency which were incorporated within the framework of program outcomes. The college's latest strategic planning process in 2007, however, identified five strategic directions for the college, the first one being 'Engage Students as Active Learners.' As part of the definition, the plan stated, "By promoting a deeper level

of student engagement, we will help students to develop the academic, interpersonal, and collaborative skills essential for them to thrive in the 21st century global economy" (strategic plan).

With this strategic direction in place, the new Academic Master Plan Steering Committee set out to turn this vision into something more workable, a task that is still in progress. The college has adopted a new Core Academic Vision Statement that broadly defines what our graduates will be able to do and perhaps also who they are as a result of attending NECC. The introduction of this report says that, "NECC students will emerge from our caring academic community prepared and motivated to become self-aware, engaged members of the communities in which they live and work." Central to this is the development of five core academic skills: communication; global awareness; information literacy; quantitative reasoning; and science and technology. The implementation process and details of these core academic skills is being examined further by various committees charged to do so.

The overall objectives for each program are stated at the beginning of each program's description. The most broad and traditional transfer programs, such as the Liberal Arts Program, define their objectives in part as follows: The associate in arts degree in Liberal Arts is designed to give students the knowledge, skills and abilities to make sound judgments, to reach reasoned conclusions and to express themselves confidently and effectively. It also offers a course of study appropriate for students who plan to transfer to a four-year educational institution. A minimum of 62 credit hours are required for graduation.

These objectives allow NECC students in the program the flexibility to explore their options for transfer while also ensuring that their classes will transfer to all state supported institutions of higher education. The objectives for more specific transfer programs, like the Business Transfer Program, still provide students with a solid general education foundation while also focusing on a more clearly defined transfer objective.

By structuring transfer programs with a wide range of objectives, our students are offered the variety of transfer opportunities necessary to suit the range of students we admit. Students are able to routinely move from the more general transfer programs to the more specific and vice versa, while also ensuring that they will be able to apply the credits they earn in a program for successful transfer to a four year institution. Meanwhile, the underlying course sequences of these programs ensure that graduates have attained a solid foundation in the knowledge, theories and practices of their chosen area of study.

The objectives for the college's career associate programs also offer a necessary balance that reflects the educational and professional needs of the students served. Because admission to some of the college's career programs is competitive and enrollments are often limited, qualified students who are not initially accepted to their career program of choice are offered admission to the General Studies Degree Program. This ensures that students can make progress through a sequence of courses designed to allow for potential admission to the career program and attain a degree or certificate during this process.

All of the college's career programs provide clearly defined course sequences. For example, the Early Childhood Education Program (ECE) gives the students a solid general education foundation which they may transfer to a four-year institution. It also prepares them for a successful practicum and/or field placement for those intending to move on to an entry-level position once they attain

their associate degrees. The ECE program objectives clearly explain these paths.

Many of the career programs are accredited by various licensing boards and agencies, further ensuring that the appropriate relationships exist between the academic content and the professional field placements or practicum experiences of these programs. This accrediting and licensing information is part of the program description available on the college website.

INTEGRITY IN THE AWARD OF ACADEMIC CREDIT

The college is cognizant of the need to benchmark its certificate and degree programs so that they maintain consistency with nationally accepted norms for such areas as length, content, class contact time, and credit hours. The division of Academic Affairs maintains primary oversight of academic programs, working in collaboration with the registrar to ensure that the college adheres to mainstream practices.

The schedule of courses is available electronically on the college's website through Banner Self Service on the home page and is updated continually. Classes are offered in the day, evening, weekend, and online. Additional options are available to students who need a course for graduation through directed studies**,** Northeast Consortium of Colleges and Universities in Massachusetts (NECCUM)**,** and Mass Colleges Online (MCO). Recently the college instituted an annual master scheduling process that allows students to plan their schedules for a full year in advance.

The Academic Affairs Committee exercises administrative oversight for the academic departments in the awarding of institutional credit or credentials. No graduation credit is offered for ESL or developmental coursework; students receive institutional credit for these courses, which allows them to apply for scholarships and financial aid. The committee defers to the professional judgment of faculty and deans to ensure that course content and delivery of instructional programs meet the course description and the learning objectives outlined in the syllabus. This is accomplished through the evaluation of faculty, materials, and course content by deans and students. All instructors are required, in accordance with the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), to submit a syllabus to their dean who verifies that the criteria on the Checklist for Course Materials are being met. Faculty of online courses must also submit a Distance Education Course Interaction Plan. Student evaluations of all courses taught by DCE (adjunct) faculty are completed each semester. Full-time faculty are evaluated according to the schedule outlined in the CBA. The office of Academic Affairs is responsible for distributing, collecting and reporting the evaluation data for review by division deans. Classroom observations by the deans occur on a regular schedule according to the current CBA.

We are also exploring other methods of assessing the quality and integrity of distance learning courses. NECC is piloting a Quality Matters (QM) project on campus that is part of an inter-institutional, faculty-driven, collegial peer review process. It has developed a set of tools linked to the research literature and commonly accepted standards of good practice for assessing the quality of online courses. The primary tool is the QM Rubric, which is designed to provide a rigorous set of standards that can be consistently applied to online courses as part of a commitment to their continuous improvement.

The Center for Instructional Technology (CIT) offers resources and faculty support for technological, instructional and pedagogical design of courses offered through Distance Education. CIT offers initial

support to assist faculty in the development of online and hybrid courses through iTeach (formerly WebCamp), a semester-long training program. The center also offers ongoing drop-in support for faculty using Blackboard. In response to faculty demands for similar support in Lawrence, CIT was allocated space on the Lawrence campus with new equipment and a rotating staff schedule for fall 2009.

Students can also earn credit through the Credit for Life Learning Program, overseen by the Center for Adult & Alternative Studies. The college recognizes the value of the breadth of experience and skills adults returning to college bring with them, and for which they may be entitled to college credit. Candidates must have matriculated into a certificate or associate degree program of study and must be able to demonstrate, in a verifiable manner, that they have obtained the same level of academic knowledge that would be obtained by taking the NECC course. The standards applied to the evaluation process are consistent, documented and meet guidelines developed by the American Council on Education (ACE). These guidelines and the Credit for Life Learning Handbook are available at Credit for Life Learning . The director of the Center for Adult & Alternative Studies also obtains faculty input as needed, and evaluates military transcripts using the ACE recommendations for granting of credit.

Program requirements, including criteria for continuation in, termination from, and re-admission to are clearly stated and accessible to students in both print form and electronically. The criteria were developed with student success in mind. The college continually reviews programs to ensure that they are compatible with their educational purposes. Requirements for students to remain in good academic standing are published electronically in the Academic Catalog. The Banner system automatically places students on academic suspension based on the grade point average and progress toward degree or certificate completion. The Dean of Academic Advising, Transfer and Articulation reviews every transcript for all suspended students each semester.

The course repetition policy is clearly stated in the catalog and in the Academic Advising Handbook (Exhibit Hard Copy 4-2 AcadAdvis). The Student Code of Conduct and Grievance Procedure is available online and has a complete listing of all college and academic policies. Also on the website are the admission criteria packets for each program with special admittance requirements, which include the health professions, deaf studies, paralegal, and human services.

Graduation requirements are listed in the Academic Advising Handbook and in the academic catalog. Each degree or certificate program is designed to reflect student attainment of stated outcomes. Students and their advisors can check their progress toward their degree requirements by doing an electronic audit in the Self Service system. Updated audit sheets are available in Academic Advising and online. All students are held to the specific program requirements listed for graduation and are instructed to meet with an advisor when choosing electives as part of their program. If course substitutions are to be made for graduation requirements, they must be approved by the program coordinator.

The college expects all students to maintain high standards of academic honesty and integrity. Instructors are required to provide students with a clearly written definition of plagiarism applicable in their discipline as part of the course syllabus. In most cases, plagiarism will be dealt with by the faculty member in charge of the course, and students will be sanctioned according to the severity of

the offense as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct and Grievance Procedure. The SafeAssign plagiarism detection service will be available to all Blackboard users beginning in the fall of 2010. Faculty also consult with the library reference staff to investigate cases of plagiarism.

All courses and programs offered for credit in concentrated time periods, via distance learning, or off campus receive support for instructional needs and follow the same guidelines as traditional courses in terms of contact hours, completion criteria, and evaluation. Off-campus students have access to a wide array of academic support services including online advising (including live chat), SmartThinking, and library services such as online journals, ebooks, and other library materials, around the clock via the library website. Students have been using the SMARTHINKING online tutoring system since 2008 in place of the Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium (CDLC) online tutoring program which the college piloted in 2005-06. The subjects in most demand include writing, calculus, chemistry, and physics. Faculty and student response to SMARTHINKING has been positive.

Study abroad programs are vetted by the Director of International Studies through the College Consortium for International Studies. College faculty who develop programs meet with students in advance and outline the requirements so that students may receive NECC credit for their work. In 2008, students participated in a summer trip to Ecuador and received four lab science credits for integrated field work and academics in biology and geology, a more rigorous course than the stand-alone college classroom experience.

To receive transfer credit, students must be matriculated into a program of study and submit an official transcript to the college. The registrar maintains a database of previously-evaluated courses for reference and consistency in the award of transfer credit. If courses have not been previously evaluated, the decision lies with the Dean of Academic Advising, Transfer, and Articulation or is sent to the appropriate academic division for review. Transfer credit is awarded only for courses with grades of C or better. The residency requirement is 24 credits for an associate degree and 12 credits for a certificate at NECC, and is published in the academic catalog. The college has numerous articulation agreements in effect with both public and private colleges, all of which are available for viewing on the Transfer Agreements web page. As a general practice of the institution, graduate credits are not accepted. An exception is made for non-matriculated students who need to take an NECC course that has a pre-requisite, but these credits do not count toward an NECC certificate or degree.

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING

NECC's approach to the assessment of student learning at the program level took its current form in the fall of 2005 with the hiring of a Director of Academic Program Review and Assessment. The director works closely with program coordinators and faculty to support program review, to develop assessment plans and to implement assessment activities. To ensure a systematic and comprehensive process, all degree programs, as well as many certificate programs at the college, were assigned a specific year to develop their program reviews. (See the NECC Program Review Schedule and the Program Review Cycle on the NECC website). The format of these reviews includes a requirement that programs have in place outcomes assessment plans. These plans provide a basis and structure for program level outcomes assessment activities. The Guide for Developing and

Implementing an Outcomes Assessment Plan, developed by the director in the fall of 2005, provides a comprehensive description of the NECC process to ensure a systematic approach. With the first plans developed in the AY 05-06, the first assessments were completed in AY 06-07. Once they begin, programs continue to perform assessments every year.

The basic requirement of this process, emphasized in the *Guide*, is the use of a team approach in all assessment work. The assessment plans completed to date have been developed by teams which typically include the program coordinator, program faculty, faculty from other academic areas, and external representatives in the form of area employers or faculty from four-year colleges to which graduates of the program often transfer. The inclusion of representatives from four-year colleges and/or from area employers on the teams that develop assessment plans facilitates their input in the description of educational objectives and learning outcomes, as well as in the examination of the curricular offerings that would meet those objectives. Overall, this team approach ensures the inclusion of relevant perspectives as well as college-wide faculty involvement in the process.

The central document in the outcomes and assessment plan is a program's curriculum map. This map details program objectives and associated student learning outcomes (what students are expected to know or be able to do after they complete the program) as well as the curricular contexts or experiences that are designed to contribute to or support this learning (how the objectives will be accomplished.) Completed Program Outcomes and Curriculum Maps, which include program mission statements, are posted on the website. In addition to program-specific outcomes, every degree program has been required to include outcomes associated with the institutional-level competencies of critical thinking, writing, and computer fluency. (See discussion in the following section on "Institutional Level Assessment.")The curriculum map further serves as a guide for the development of the assessment map and assessment schedule. The assessment map shows possible methods that will be used to assess each of the learning outcomes, while the schedule details the specific outcomes on which each year's assessment efforts will be focused.

Completed assessment plans are included with program reviews in specially prepared program review binders, which are distributed to various interested parties and which are also available for review in the college library, and as part of sample completed program reviews on the Program Review web page. Sample plans are also available on the Outcomes Assessment web page.

During the 2005-06 academic year, six degree and certificate programs developed outcomes assessment plans in conjunction with the completion of their reviews. Each academic year since, additional degree and certificate programs have completed these plans, usually in conjunction with their reviews, with the total at the end of the 2008-09 academic year being 24. Included on the teams that developed plans for these 24 programs were approximately 70 full and part-time faculty members from 26 different programs or departments across all four academic divisions of the college, six NECC administrators, 10 representatives from area colleges, two area high school principals, and 10 representatives of area employers. This participation demonstrates the significant representation of and involvement of these various groups in the outcomes assessment work. By the winter of 2009, it is expected that eight more programs will be added to this group with completed plans as they move through the program review cycle.

Follow-up reports of assessment activities at NECC follow a suggested format, detailed in a template on the website, Template for Assessment Documentation. In addition, an annual process for the presentation and sharing of program assessment activities and findings has been instituted. Information about these Assessment Summits, including agendas and sample PowerPoint presentations, is posted on the website.

Programs which follow the internal assessment process described above include many programs which receive specialized accreditation, approval, or certification (e.g. dental assisting, paralegal studies, early childhood education, and human services.) Some, however, including Radiologic Technology, choose exclusively to follow a process outlined by the external organization. Developing learning outcomes vis-à-vis explicit agency standards and providing evidence of students' achievement of these outcomes are typically requirements built into these external processes.

There is extensive information about the program review and assessment process on the college's website with highlights of current activities included in the Program Review and Outcomes Assessment Newsletters. A complete report on assessment of student learning, is available. (Exhibits Hard Copy 4-3 to 21 for Program Reviews and Exhibits Hard Copy 4-22 to 32 for Assessment Reports).

INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL ASSESSMENT

Institutional level understanding of student learning has been represented to date by three college-wide competencies, developed in 2002. These three competencies - critical thinking, writing, and computer fluency - were detailed in the form of outlines which provided information concerning the specific learning outcomes that would be associated with each. During the academic year 2008-09, in response to the strategic plan, a committee of faculty and administrators from the academic affairs area met to revisit the three competencies, and determine if revisions were indicated. The result was the development of a new Vision for Core Academic Skills at NECC. This vision statement was translated into five core academic skills with associated learning outcomes. Institutional level assessment methods are also being explored, with a pilot to assess written communication scheduled for spring 2010.

COURSE LEVEL ASSESSMENT

Course objectives, which focus on intended learning, are posted on course syllabi, consistent with requirements of the current applicable Massachusetts collective bargaining agreement as described earlier. The objectives statements are also reviewed to ensure that they address all of the essential curricular components of the courses. (For examples of course syllabi, see Exhibit Hard Copy 4-33 SAMSYLL.)

Courses typically include a variety of pedagogical approaches including lectures, group discussion, demonstrations, and research projects. Courses with laboratory sections, required by close to 80% of the degree programs, emphasize hands-on experiences. Assessment methods used vary widely and include objective tests, skills tests, or demonstrations. Course assessments are typically administered on multiple occasions during a term, allowing faculty to review student work so as to provide timely and detailed feedback and inform their teaching.

Appraisal

One of the greatest strengths of the college is the willingness of staff, faculty, and administrators to embrace change in response to student and community needs, as identified through the strategic planning process and the Achieving The Dream (ATD) data gathering. This is reflected in the academic program in part by the adoption of new pedagogies, flexible course scheduling and alternative modes of course delivery while maintaining the quality and coherence of programming. Examples include:

- The new applied science program which has attracted 26 students in the first year.
- Flexible scheduling, including "hybrid" blocks (classes that may meet for only an hour on campus each week, and complete the balance of their work online).
- The accelerated business program, which offers students the opportunity to complete a business degree in as little as 16 months by attending "hybrid" courses two days a week.
- A variety of alternative instructional models and interventions which have been put in place for math courses, largely in response to the ATD information regarding low completion rates for math students. Examples include supplemental instruction, a modular section format, self-paced/ individualized instruction, accelerated options, and short refresher courses—completely online or with assistance in the tutoring centers. An interdepartmental math retention team is working on professional development in these areas and on the continuum of skills from developmental through college-level math.

Another strength is the inclusiveness and transparency in goal-setting and decision making with regard to the academic program. This began with the strategic planning summit in 2007 that drew participation from the college and the community at large in determining the direction the college would take for the next three year period from 2008-2011. The makeup of the Academic Affairs Committee is further evidence of inclusiveness and transparency as it includes faculty and staff from all of the divisions, and from both the academic and student services "sides of the house". Discussions and decisions made by the committee are available to all divisions and departments. Another example is the broad-based approach taken by the Academic Master Plan Steering Committee to determine how to systematically address academic affairs goals with the participation of all interested parties at the college. Committees were formed and the work is ongoing; regular reports are made to the college community and feedback is solicited. For example, the work of the Core Academic Skills Committee was presented at the All College Assembly and sent in advance to everyone at NECC through broadcast e-mail for their input. Feedback was incorporated into the final vision statement and the selection of the core academic skills.

The willingness of faculty and staff to participate in these college-wide efforts (in addition to all that is going on with standing committee work, staff/faculty interest groups, etc.) has stretched them to the point of feeling overcommitted, with limited time for reflection. The Academic Master Plan was created to provide a structure within which to organize and prioritize all of the campus-wide initiatives. It has succeeded in doing so, but not necessarily in reducing the amount of work for the community at large. The use of data to inform decision-making has been accelerated by our participation in the ATD initiative. The identification of student cohorts who are completing courses and graduating (or transferring) at a lower

than average rate for the college has helped guide the allocation of funds, space, and personnel to various activities designed to improve student success. Although it is very early in the process (most of the interventions have been in place for a year or less) the numbers in targeted areas have improved. (For full data reports regarding ATD, see the ATD Data Reports web page.)

Other efforts involve collecting both quantitative and qualitative information regarding the success of these interventions. A computer based log-in and tracking system was created for the college level Math Tutoring and Resource Center. The system was implemented in spring of 2009. It gathers statistical data on students and tutoring services. The system can also be merged with the college's Banner Information System to gather grades and other information that will assist in the measure of student success rates. In addition, student users completed an evaluation of their experience in the center (Exhibit 4-2 Math Tutoring and Resource Center Tutee Evaluation.pdf).

The increase in demand for data and a significant increase in interest and trust in data and data-informed decision-making over the past several years have not been met with a corresponding increase in resources to meet this demand. Resources in the form of time and expertise are needed to support research design, data collection, and data analyses. The role of Institutional Research is to serve both external and internal entities. For external purposes, data management and reporting is critical and may take precedence over internal requests for data.

Similarly, there is increasing demand for Blackboard accounts for faculty and students, and interest in the development of online courses to in part ease the demand for classroom space at the college. As part of the college's continuity plan in response to a possible flu pandemic in fall 2009, faculty have been encouraged to use Blackboard to disseminate and collect student assignments. The CIT staff, with IT support, has made every effort to address the demands without a corresponding increase in staffing (or staff hours).

The priorities of resource allocation are an issue across the college. Every area has needs which are unmet. Although it is not always the most accurate data for comparison purposes, IPEDS (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System) figures have suggested for several years that funding for instruction at NECC lags behind the funding provided by peer institutions. Despite this, and the current budget constraints, we have accomplished much in the academic area under the leadership of the new Vice President for Academic Affairs including:

- A multi-year plan to increase the number of full-time faculty and the percentage of courses they teach.
- The development of a capital asset inventory along with a multi-year plan to replace capital inventory such as computers and lab equipment.

Because of the strengths mentioned above: willingness of staff, faculty, and administrators to embrace change; inclusiveness and transparency in goal-setting and decision-making; and use of data to inform decision-making, we believe our academic programs are strong**.** NECC's undergraduate programs and offerings continue to reach for the goals outlined in the college's latest strategic plan. Many parts of these goals have already been realized in pockets throughout the college, as shown by the following endeavors. They demonstrate the college's commitment to a more holistic, community-oriented approach to learning and the undergraduate experience.

- The college continues its support of integrated learning communities that help break down traditional disciplinary barriers.
- The college's honors program continues to expand, drawing more students as it offers classes from an even wider variety of sources. Honors sections of English composition are now also offered every semester.
- The Newburyport Tree Project, a service learning project that grew out of a professional development effort, took students and learning directly into one of the communities the college serves, integrating learning while changing students' lives.
- Service learning efforts at the college continue to earn institutional support. Many classes at the college now offer formal and informal service learning opportunities with the guidance of the service learning.

Although the college has pursued parts of this engaged student vision through these efforts, formalizing this goal is helping the Academic Master Plan Steering Committee organize these efforts into a more coherent vision of engaged student learning at NECC.

The success of our transfer programs is difficult to measure accurately, but is easier to observe. The college's steady enrollment growth in many transfer programs is the most obvious testament that these programs continue to serve our students. The college's participation in the Joint Admissions Program, the Commonwealth Transfer Compact, and the Tuition Advantage Program all demonstrate the success of our efforts to make transfer to four year schools barrier free. However, it must be noted that a new transfer program, called Mass Transfer, has been approved by all state colleges for implementation beginning in fall 2009. In addition, the college has developed direct partnerships with area four year colleges to offer specific transfer programs for NECC graduates. Students may opt to continue their baccalaureate degree at either the four-year campus, or at continuation programs offered on the NECC campus. Finally, the college's Office of Institutional Research is attempting to track the success of our students once they transfer to our 4-year state institutions. The latest NECC Transfer Study of 2005 NECC graduates who were present in Massachusetts public four year colleges and universities in the fall of 2007 shows that our students do well once they leave NECC.

We looked at how the students performed academically by looking at the average Quality Point Average (QPA) at their new institution. Not all students had an earned QPA because they may not have attended the transfer institution long enough to have the QPA posted to their transcript. The QPA earned at NECC is not counted at the transfer institution. The data obtained is as follows:

EXHIBIT 1: TRANSFER STUDENT SUCCESS

INSTITUTION	QPA	NUMBER WITH QPA
UMass Lowell	2.92	145
Salem State	3.28	54
UMass Amherst	2.75	21
UMass Boston	2.66	10
Fitchburg State	3.32	26
Worcester State	3.10	7

This data suggests that we do a good job in preparing our students for transfer to four-year institutions.

The success of our career programs is evident by our students' pass rate of various licensing exams and by the job placement rate of our graduates once they attain degrees from NECC. For example, the 2006 nursing exam pass rate for first-time test-takers was 92.6%,

above the Board of Higher Education's target pass rate of 85%. The 2008 Graduates: One Year Later report also demonstrates the college's success with career programs. The "Positive Placement Rate" for 2008 Survey Respondents in this report is 96%.

The program review process that has evolved in the past five years has become an integral and meaningful part of the college's efforts to evaluate student success on a program level. Program coordinators who led program review teams, participated in the development of outcomes assessment plans, and who in many cases also participated in actual program-level assessments, were provided with a set of questions designed to elicit their appraisal of the three processes.

As reported by faculty, following are some specific examples of activities undertaken by programs in response to assessment findings:

EXHIBIT 2: PROGRAM OUTCOME ASSESSMENT RESULTS

PROGRAM	ASSESSMENT RESULTS OUTCOME
GRAPHIC DESIGN	A course description change was … submitted to Academic Affairs for Computer Illustration which will be more of an advanced class incorporating more advanced level work for our students to have in their portfolios.
	Portfolio for Graphic Design—The course has been changed from a 1 credit course to a 3 credit course to address necessary skills that students need upon graduation. The department sent out a survey requesting information from area designers and printers asking their input on critical skills necessary for the workplace. Our new Portfolio class will address many of these issues.
	Designing Web Pages is a course that has been made a requirement for students entering the workplace. As identified in the survey, employers identified knowledge of web design as critical to students entering the workplace. This will take effect spring 2010 semester.
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION	The ECE outcomes assessment work findings have been shared with the program faculty, the ECE advisory committee and college colleagues who are also involved in outcomes assessment work. The specific program changes that have been made include revisions to rubrics for assignments.

PROGRAM	ASSESSMENT RESULTS OUTCOME
LIBERAL ARTS	The findings of our writing and critical thinking outcomes, which indicated that males score lower on 21 out of 23 assessed outcomes, launched a year-long research project which produced information that is more far-reaching than the Liberal Arts program alone. The findings are being dove-tailed with the goals of the Achieve the Dream initiative which the larger college community has recently under-taken.
LIBERAL ARTS: JOURNALISM/ COMMUNICATION OPTION	My assessment revealed a weakness in students' command of AP style and inclusion of quotes in their articles, so I have modified my lesson plans (particularly in Journalism I) to include more of those elements.
BUSINESS MANAGEMENT—BUSINESS TRANSFER	In the Business area we have gone back and strengthened the areas that need development; in other words, we put more time and effort into improving the directions or instructions that we give to the students on those assignments; we spend more time in the classroom working on them; and, we emphasize them more to the student and in our grading. For example, when we discovered that students were not very good at researching information or articles for their Project Reports we worked with the Library to develop a web page specifically for business students that provides them with access to Business Periodicals and Data Bases that contain information or articles that would be appropriate for their reports. We also worked with the Writing Center to have a tutor assigned to the business students to help them with the format, structure, and composition of the Project Report. In some instances we even offered additional or extra credit if they went to work with the tutor.
	We also learned a lot about how we grade [the students]; this led to more consistent grading of student assignments.

PROGRAM	ASSESSMENT RESULTS OUTCOME
DENTAL ASSISTING	As a result of assessment for 2008 we revised the DAS111 content to include more case type scenarios on manual processing. This would help students on the DANB examination to score higher in the "manual processing" content even though we no longer practice this outdated mode for developing x-rays. In addition, we have lobbied* long and hard to have "ID numbers" assigned to students taking the DANB examinations so that when they take them in component parts we can later see how each one did on all three components AND if they needed to re-take a component, to find out if they did pass on a second attempt. I am happy to report on the most recent DANB summary, all students have been assigned an ID NUMBER. (*Note: This "lobbying" effort with the American Dental Association commenced with outcomes assessment work, when a close look at DANB examination data showed some gaps in how the data was reported, which affected the ability of program faculty to identify areas where students were weak.)

Overall, comments concerning the program review process were quite positive. Most faculty members mentioned that the process went well, and that they received a great deal of support and help, especially from the Director of Academic Program Review and Assessment. Most found the process useful in terms of better understanding their programs, identifying and securing needed resources, and/or making significant program changes. Other comments noted that while the process may be useful and informative, it is also time consuming, and difficult sometimes to manage along with other responsibilities.

As noted above, outcomes assessment plans are typically developed in conjunction with completing program reviews. Due to the amount of time required to develop plans, coordinators are advised to work on them the semester before they begin program reviews, making the entire process a two-semester endeavor. As an indication of institutional support, coordinators do receive re-assigned time for this work, but only for one semester. Not surprisingly, there were a few comments relating to time pressures because of the addition of this labor-intensive task to existing responsibilities, although it is especially encouraging that many comments were completely positive, especially noting the support received, perceptions that the exercise was useful, and that the process was "clear and well-organized".

In addition to planning actions, there has been a lot of activity related to "closing the loop," and actually making program improvements. Some information concerning assessment-related action plans and activities is included on NEASC Form E1A. Programs are reporting specific changes in response to assessment findings. For

example one program coordinator commented the process led to more consistent grading of student assignments. Also the Portfolio for Graphic Design was changed from a one-credit course to a three-credit course to address necessary skills that students need upon graduation.

Overall, the faculty see value in assessment work, even though demands on time and resources are increased. In a general way, then, the process of assessing student learning has been accepted and integrated into the regular work at NECC, at the course and program levels. There is a heavy reliance on adjunct faculty members, as is typical in community colleges. This fact creates coordination issues. Time constraints continue to be an issue; nonetheless, coordinators and faculty have been very productive and produced a large body of well-designed and carefully administered assessments, the results of which have been thoughtfully considered and used to implement important program improvements.

Institutional Effectiveness

NECC is committed to evaluating the quality, integrity and effectiveness of its academic programs through multiple forms of assessment, including program reviews, ongoing learning outcomes assessment, institutional assessment of General Education outcomes, program-specific accreditation, special initiatives such as Achieving the Dream, and other means of continuous quality improvement.

All programs have published learning outcomes and regularly participate in program review and learning outcomes assessment processes. Work with Achieving the Dream has led to the creation of college wide Key Performance Indicators related to the progress of our students from developmental to college level coursework, successful completion of "gatekeeper" courses, closing success gaps between minority and majority students, year-to-year retention, and the completion of degrees and certificates.

The ongoing evaluation of progress in these areas has resulted in public disclosure of findings and substantive changes to curriculum, staffing, resource allocation, professional development, and other identified needs.

Projection

The Academic Master Plan time line will be adjusted as needed to correlate with the college's strategic plan time line.

- By 2012, in order to improve transitions of students from adult basic education through developmental studies and into college level coursework, the college will identify and implement new "career pathways," responsive to the changing workforce needs of our community, for students to enhance their employability.
- The program learning outcomes assessment process will be streamlined for faculty chairs and coordinators, while maintaining a rigorous and effective system for ensuring the effectiveness of program level learning outcomes.
- In order to strengthen the connection between individual course outcomes and the larger programs that contain them, systems will be devised for ensuring that relevant program outcomes are considered when course outcomes are constructed.
- The college will implement a process for assessing core academic skills at the institutional level, beginning in 2010.

STANDARD 5: FACULTY

Strengths	Challenges
Dynamic and engaged faculty	Hire more minority faculty
Faculty participation in professional development	Increase percentage of courses taught by full-time faculty
Hiring of new full-time faculty	

Description

In the fall of 2009, Northern Essex Community College (NECC) employed 111 full-time faculty (68 female and 43 male), teaching on two campuses within our five academic divisions; five part-time day faculty; and 363 adjunct or Division of Continuing Education faculty (212 female and 151 male) teaching in the day, in the evening, and on the weekend. The DCE faculty numbers include day faculty who may be teaching evening or day courses under the DCE contract. Forty-three of the full-time faculty members have reached the rank of full professor; 14 are associate professors; 34 are assistant professors; and 20 are instructors. The number of full-time faculty at the college has increased by 11 over the last three years, an increase of 11%. This overall increase reflects the goal of the academic area to increase the percentage of day courses taught by full-time faculty to 65%. Currently 60% of our day courses are taught by full time faculty, an increase of 7% over the last two years.

With limited resources, the college has had to prioritize requests for new faculty positions. To this end, in 2007 the academic vice president established a prioritization committee, which includes faculty from each academic division, to review the requests for new faculty positions and rank them in priority order. Under this process, requests for new faculty positions are accompanied by a data-driven rationale.

It has been the goal of the college to increase the number of faculty who are members of minority groups. The college presently employs 12 full-time faculty who are minority group members and 24 DCE faculty who are minority group members. These numbers represent an increase of ten for full-time faculty since 2001 (there

were only two full-time minority faculty teaching at NECC in that year) and an increase of 13 for adjunct faculty since 2001. The college has used a variety of strategies to recruit qualified minority faculty, including increased advertising and direct recruitment efforts through regional organizations and graduate schools.

FACULTY QUALIFICATIONS

NECC faculty are well qualified for their teaching responsibilities. Of the full-time faculty, 15% have doctorates; 79% have master's degrees; and 6% have bachelor's degrees. Those in career education also have relevant certificates and other training awards; they also work with advisory boards and accrediting agencies to keep their curriculum current. NECC faculty regularly attend conferences and make presentations, usually concerning programs and pedagogies that they have developed. Such presentations are consistent with the mission of the college. Faculty also engage in professional development opportunities offered by the college in order to keep current in their fields.

FACULTY WORKLOAD AND ASSIGNMENTS

Article XII of the MCCC/MTA Collective Bargaining Agreement provides detailed parameters for full-time faculty workload, which includes instructional and non-instructional responsibilities. Instructional duties equate to 15 credit hours per semester, with some adjustment for lab sections, individual research, and special college projects. Faculty members submit course preferences biannually to their department chair, who then recommends a departmental schedule to the assistant dean or dean of the division.

Non-instructional activities include office hours, student advising, and college and community service. Again, the MCCC/MTA Collective Bargaining Agreement provides minimum and maximum limits on these tasks and delineates a formula for adjusting them so that faculty workloads are consistent across the college. A typical faculty member teaching five 3-credit lecture courses would hold four office hours, advise 18 students, and serve on one major college committee. Many, however, serve on multiple committees, subcommittees, and task forces. Finally, the college may schedule up to seven professional activity days for faculty and staff during the course of the academic year.

DCE faculty workload ranges from one course to four courses per semester, depending on the interest and availability of the instructor and the needs of the college. Office hours, college service, and advising are not required, although some participate in these activities voluntarily.

Full-time professional staff generally work 12 month contracts at 37 1/2 hours per week. Professional staff that work less than that have their salaries and work schedules pro-rated. Individual responsibilities vary greatly within this group, but the MCCC/MTA Collective Bargaining Agreement specifies the range of duties that fall within this position description. Professional staff also provides student advisement and serve on college committees; a few teach one non-traditional course per semester.

Faculty are responsible for course and curriculum development. New courses and programs, along with changes to existing ones, are brought before the Academic Affairs Committee for approval. NECC faculty also participate in evaluations of their academic programs. Program review provides a framework within which faculty delineate learning outcomes for their programs and determine the most effective means of assessing these outcomes (see Standard 4). A revised program review process has been in place since 2005;

as of Fall 09, 27 programs have completed this process. Eight more programs were involved in program review in 2010. In addition, faculty have been involved in recent years in an effort to revise college-wide learning outcomes.

As part of their college service responsibilities, faculty and professional staff participate in institutional governance by serving on college-wide committees and sub-committees, as well as special interest committees and task forces. The All College Assembly (ACA) provides the largest forum for faculty participation in governance. The assembly includes all employees at the college (except the president), and it supports four standing committees with elected representatives. (See Standard 3 for a detailed description of the functions and responsibilities of each of these committees.) In addition to the ACA, faculty serve on various committees associated with important aspects of college life, and committees that address current college priorities and initiatives such as the Academic Master Plan, Achieving the Dream (ATD), and of course, the current self study. The Executive Committee of the ACA has served as the steering committee for the college's strategic planning throughout the tenure of President David Hartleb. Our most recent strategic planning process involved many of the college faculty through the use of Appreciative Inquiry.

ADVISING

Full-time faculty members are responsible for advising 18 students each semester. That number may be adjusted, with a commensurate change in equivalent non-instructional workload hours. In the Fall 09 semester, three faculty members received a workload reduction to advise more students. Thirty-five new faculty members have gone through a semester long training in the advising center to learn how to more effectively advise their students. Five faculty members are online advisors.

LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Faculty at NECC have been involved with Learning Communities (LCs) since 2000. A learning community consists of a group of students who are enrolled in the same courses with the same instructors. Learning communities provide new curricular structures that link courses so that students have opportunities for deeper understanding and integration of the material they are learning, and more interaction with one another and their teachers as fellow participants in the learning experience. Since their inception, a total of 102 LCs have run at NECC. In the spring 2010, 10 LCs will be offered.

FACULTY RECRUITMENT AND APPOINTMENT

The college has in place a Search Committee Handbook which outlines the policies and procedures for hiring full-time faculty and professional staff. This set of common guidelines delineates the roles and responsibilities of individuals included in the hiring process (academic vice president, dean, committee chair, committee members), and establishes time lines and preferred practices. The handbook expresses our commitment to seek qualified minority candidates. Search committees must include at least one member of the diversity committee or National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI) team, one member from a department outside the hiring department, and a student representative (if possible). Faculty members from the department and the search committee write the posting, which is then submitted to the hiring dean for review. Postings include a description of the college and its mission, responsibilities of the position, necessary skills and desirable characteristics for job

candidates, and minimum and preferred qualifications (generally a minimum of a master's degree and some college teaching experience, preferably at the community college level).

The college keeps active job postings on its website, but also employs regional and national venues, both print and electronic, in an effort to attract a diverse pool of candidates. Human Resources personnel review applications according to legal guidelines, the college's Affirmative Action policy, and the required qualifications stated for each position. All qualified applications are forwarded to the search committee. Members of the search committee establish screening criteria before reviewing the applications in order to be certain all candidates are treated equally. The search committee conducts the first round of interviews and recommends three finalists to be interviewed by the divisional dean and/or Vice President of Academic Affairs. The committee's recommendations are unranked, but may include a statement of the strengths of each candidate. The Vice President of Academic Affairs recommends a candidate to the president, who may then nominate him/her for appointment by the board of trustees. Only full-time positions are brought to the board.

Once appointed, the faculty member is given a one-year contract, which states the terms employment in accordance with the Collective Bargaining Agreement. Faculty are eligible for tenure after six years of full-time consecutive service.

Part-time faculty positions are advertised on the college's website, and in local or, if necessary, regional venues (print and electronic). The hiring procedure is usually conducted by an assistant dean in collaboration with the department chairperson/coordinator. Upon teaching five sections over three consecutive years, part-time faculty earn reappointment rights from a seniority list, as outlined in Article X of the DCE bargaining agreement.

Full and part-time professional staff members are also covered by the MCCC/MTA collective bargaining agreement with similar guidelines for recruitment and appointment, as well as policies and procedures for evaluation, tenure, and termination. The professional staff work in various areas, including the library, enrollment management, and academic support areas.

EVALUATION

Faculty at NECC are evaluated according to the criteria and procedures specified by their respective contracts.

Evaluation of full- and part-time day faculty consists of a classroom observation, student evaluations, a course materials evaluation, student advisement and college service evaluations, and personnel file review. The faculty member receives from the administration a summary evaluation which weights the evaluation components as follows:

EXHIBIT 3: FACULTY EVALUATION COMPONENTS

Student Evaluation	25%
Course Materials Evaluation	15%
Classroom Observation Evaluation	25%
Student Advisement Evaluation	10%
College Service Evaluation	10%
Personnel File Review	15%

Tenured faculty are evaluated every third year. They have student evaluations annually, but in non-evaluation years these have no formal weight.

DCE faculty evaluation consists of a classroom observation, a course materials evaluation, and student evaluations. Student

evaluations for DCE faculty are conducted each semester for each section being taught. DCE faculty must have a classroom observation at least once before they have taught five courses over three consecutive fiscal years. Subsequent classroom observations may be conducted for reasons which must be stated by the administration. The DCE contract also allows for the possibility of a comprehensive evaluation based on the previously stated factors and any relevant information in the faculty member's personnel file.

COMPENSATION

Compensation for all NECC faculty is determined by their respective collective bargaining agreements.

For day faculty, compensation is determined by a point system which takes into account the faculty member's teaching experience, rank, seniority, performance evaluations, licensures, and educational credentials. The current contract includes the formula which weighs the relevant variables to determine exactly where the faculty member falls on the pay scale. Day faculty receive a variety of supplemental benefits, including health insurance, for which they may choose the provider from a slate of state-approved vendors. They are obliged to participate in the state retirement system.

The DCE contract specifies four steps in the faculty pay scale, based upon the number of courses the faculty member has taught and the number of years of seniority he or she has accrued. For a three credit course, the pay ranges from $2538 at Step 1 to $3069 at Step 4 (see the DCE bargaining agreement). DCE faculty receive no fringe benefits, a fact which has become of increasing concern to them and the bargaining units in recent years. They are obliged to contribute to a Massachusetts tax-sheltered savings/retirement plan, but there is no employer contribution.

Pay for professional staff at NECC is determined by the MTA/MCCC agreement. As with day faculty, salaries of professional staff are determined by a point system which takes into account the employee's academic credentials, experience, seniority, performance evaluations, licensures, and professional development activities. They receive the same supplemental benefits as day faculty.

FACULTY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The majority of full-time NECC faculty (and a significant number of DCE faculty) participate in some form of professional development each year. The overall mission of the Office of Faculty and Staff Development (OFSD) is to encourage and promote professional development opportunities, personal growth, and community building for all faculty and staff. The OFSD views professional development as a life-long process and encourages all faculty, full-time, part-time day, and DCE, to participate.

The OFSD has a full-time dean and a full-time administrative assistant. In 2008, a faculty fellow was selected to facilitate faculty discussions, conduct workshops and coach faculty. Each semester, the OFSD offers a wide array of professional development programs and opportunities which include workshops, summer institutes, collegial conversations, and symposia on topics related to teaching and learning; faculty coaching; support for attending local conferences, such as the State Wide Conference on Teaching, Learning and Student Development, and the New England Faculty Development Consortium Conference; as well as a pool of funds to support individual professional activities. Typically, about 175 people attend our own annual Professional Day Conference, which is comprised of best practice sessions offered by NECC faculty and staff. The OFSD also sponsors a DCE faculty dinner orientation and a DCE Teaching

and Learning Symposium. DCE faculty are eligible to participate in all activities.

The OFSD, in collaboration with the Center for Instructional Technology (CIT), also provides many opportunities for professional development in integrating technology with teaching, particularly for faculty who are doing online and hybrid course work. For example, iTEACH is a semester-long faculty development program that provides an opportunity for faculty to learn and design a pedagogically sound and interactive online or hybrid course. iTEACH began in January of 2002 and, as of spring 2009, 81 faculty members had participated in the program. On-campus computer classes are offered for all faculty and staff.

In addition, long-term projects ranging from two to three semesters are an important part of the OFSD's commitment to faculty. Examples of such programs include: Teaching in Community, a year-long reflection and renewal program for faculty (68 participants since 1999); a semester-long orientation for new full-time faculty which includes an introduction to the college and teaching and learning sessions, followed by a semester of training in the Advising Center (35 participants since fall 2006); and the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL).

In 2008, OFSD launched a new year-long employee Leadership Academy. There have been a total of 24 participants to date, 11 of whom were faculty.

Another new initiative, in FY-2010 was the sponsorship of four SFIGs (Staff/Faculty Interest Groups): Universal Course Design and Teaching Visual Learners; Engagement Across the Curriculum - A Collaborative Approach; Reading for Understanding; Latino Success Project. The SFIGs offer faculty and staff an opportunity for ongoing, collaborative research and dissemination of important pedagogical activities. Each SFIG is lead by NECC faculty and staff.

The OFSD also provides ongoing professional development awards to faculty and staff each year. In the past five years, faculty have received $139,002. These funds support faculty to attend conferences, workshops and submit for presentation.

In addition, OFSD also supports group attendance at conferences such as Massachusetts CollegeOnline, the Statewide Conference on Teaching and Learning and the New England Faculty Development Consortium (73 participants in 2010).

OFSD provides a library of teaching and learning books and materials and educational publications that are distributed regularly to faculty.

POLICIES GOVERNING FACULTY ETHICS

A number of policies and procedures are in place to ensure that faculty act responsibly and ethically in carrying out their professional obligations. The HR section of the NECC website outlines institutional policies on drug use and sexual harassment. The MCCC/MTA Agreement also deals with faculty ethics in its section on academic responsibility. All state employees in Massachusetts must adhere to the regulations and guidelines promulgated by the State Ethics Commission and the Office of Campaign Finance and Political Activities related to state employees. Links to these websites are on the NECC website in the Human Resources section and new employees are asked/directed during their new employee orientation to review all of this material. The college's internet policy prohibits the use of the network at the college to download or transmit child pornography, to advance a political campaign, to harass or slander another person, or to perform work for profit.

NECC responds to complaints regarding faculty ethics through the following mechanisms: the Student Grievance Procedure (see current "Student Code of Conduct and NECC Policies and Procedures"),

a multi-step process that moves from informal attempts to resolve the problem, to the final formal process by which the student submits a written grievance to a grievance committee specially convened to hear that grievance; an administrative investigation; and the Affirmative Action Plan Grievance Procedure.

Since 2000, seven faculty were grieved for ethics violations (sexual harassment); all of these cases were resolved, with the faculty losing their positions through non-reappointment.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Academic freedom is a guarantee of the faculty collective bargaining agreements and a given at the college. Course materials are not censored, and free speech is not curtailed. Faculty members advising student publications are not subject to any pressure to control the content of these publications. Few problems concerning academic freedom have been reported at the college over the past several years. In the 08-09 academic year, no complaints regarding academic freedom were filed with the unit's Grievance Coordinator.

Appraisal

NECC is to be commended for its recent efforts to increase its number of full-time faculty and the percentage of day courses which they teach. Despite severe budget cuts reflective of the state and national economic downturn, the college has continued to hire new faculty members each year (six for FY-2010) and has increased the percentage of day courses taught by full-timers from 53% to 60% in two years. The creation of the prioritization committee for new faculty hires has been an important improvement to the institution's approach to the hiring of new faculty, creating rational criteria for and a transparency in the distribution of new full-time faculty positions.

Gains in minority faculty hiring since 2001 have been significant, though more modest in recent years. In 2001 there were two full-time minority faculty members (2.1% of the full-time faculty); in 2005 there were ten; today, there are twelve (11.1% of the full-time faculty). In this regard, the college has clearly benefited from its Title V grant, which provided both funding and an impetus to bring in new bilingual and bicultural faculty. The college is probably doing everything it can do at this time to recruit qualified minority faculty. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the college needs to remain proactive on this matter in order to ensure that the college does not miss opportunities to find and hire desirable candidates.

FACULTY WORKLOAD AND ASSIGNMENTS

Most faculty appear to be satisfied with the established methods of assigning course coverage and determining their workload. Although a 15 credit hour workload is demanded by the collective bargaining agreement, many faculty members feel it is a heavy teaching load, particularly because the college is quite active in pursuing community and academic initiatives which demand faculty commitment. Since workload is governed by a contractual formula, issues are usually resolved between the faculty member and his/her immediate supervisor by adjusting other areas of the workload, or by adjusting the total workload in the subsequent semester. In 2009 the Vice President of Academic Affairs convened a committee of faculty and administrators to examine and standardize reassigned time for disproportionate non-instructional responsibilities.

RECRUITMENT AND APPOINTMENT

Recent procedural revisions have solidified and enhanced the college's recruitment and hiring procedures. The inclusion of a

diversity-trained or NCBI/Diversity Committee member on each search committee, the careful attention to the selection of search committee members, and the thoroughness with which interviews are shaped have contributed to an effective selection process which has translated into the hiring of valuable new faculty.

Defined budget allocations which allow nationwide outreach, along with a new practice of offering a $500 travel stipend to candidates who reside beyond a comfortable driving distance, may be playing a role in attracting more candidates for interviews. The new hiring guidelines have made screening committees aware of unintended biases that may occur, and new standardized procedures ensure that interviews for all candidates are the same.

The college places high priority on integrating and orienting new hires. Newly appointed full-time faculty are given one course reassignment in their first fall semester in order to participate in a semester-long orientation to the college. In the fall semester, the OFSD conducts weekly two-hour sessions with the new faculty cohort, introducing them to people, processes, and services at the college, as well as facilitating discussions around issues in teaching and learning. During the spring semester, new faculty do not receive advisees, but instead spend time in the college's Advising Center becoming acquainted with the procedures for placement, advising, registration, and graduation, while they shadow experienced academic advisors who are actively working with students.

In addition, new DCE faculty are invited to an orientation dinner before the semester begins, where they are introduced to administrators and other faculty, and where they are given essential information about students, curriculum, and operating procedures at the college. The OFSD has also been able to offer a teaching and learning forum for DCE faculty on Saturdays. In addition, an extensive guide for part-time instructors is available on the college website . Despite these efforts, it has always been difficult to involve a large number of part-time faculty.

ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

There can be little doubt that NECC employs an engaged, dynamic group of faculty who are routinely involved in exploring pedagogical improvement and innovation, and actively involved with the creation of new curricula. In 2008-2009, for example, 39 new and substantially revised courses were approved by the Academic Affairs Committee; seven were not approved. In addition, 21 Special Topics courses, which run experimentally before being added to the catalog, were proposed. Thirty-two courses received minor revisions (for example, changes in title, pre-requisites, or contact hours) and 13 courses were inactivated. Ten programs underwent revision, three were inactivated and four new programs were approved to begin in the spring of 2010: Music Technology Certificate, Medical Office Assistant, EKG Technician Certificate, and Liberal Arts: Physical Sciences Option.

NECC faculty have enthusiastically embraced online teaching options and have responded favorably to the support offered by the administration for developing them. The use of technology in our classrooms has increased exponentially, with more and more faculty using Blackboard either to offer their courses online or in a hybrid format, or simply to enhance their curriculum with a web companion. In the Fall 09 semester, 50 faculty taught online courses; 26 taught hybrids; 23 taught web-enhanced sections; and 131 used web companions for their face-to-face classes. While demand for smart classrooms had been exceeding supply, the college was able to use federal stimulus funds in FY-2010 to convert all classrooms to

smart rooms (see Standard 8). In addition, faculty have begun to be involved, on a voluntary basis, with online advising.

The increase in online instruction has been accompanied by various efforts to evaluate its effectiveness. Formally and informally, faculty have been involved with efforts to determine which students are most likely to succeed in online courses, and to develop a screening process to discourage students from taking online courses for the wrong reasons. At the same time, the institution has gathered data to compare students' success in online courses compared with face-to-face courses. So far, little has been done to evaluate the effectiveness of hybrid courses and the use of Blackboard for web companion and web enhanced courses. Such efforts should be underway in the near future.

Faculty involvement with learning communities has been another important pedagogical initiative at NECC. The learning community initiative began here as a kind of grass roots faculty movement (with the support of OFSD). Learning communities were proposed by instructors and were vetted by a faculty committee before recommendation for administrative approval. For several years the number of learning communities offered was small and consistent. The college now has a new Learning Communities Steering Committee and appear to be on the verge of increasing our learning community offerings.

NECC faculty who have taught in learning communities have been enthusiastic about their experiences. They believe that LCs help them make connections and build stronger relationships with and among students. Student responses to LCs have been equally positive.

NECC faculty continue to distinguish themselves through their initiatives, awards, and achievements. While it is beyond the scope of this report to enumerate them all, a brief sampling may indicate the talent and accomplishment of our professors. Faculty members have been involved in many curricular-related activities, including the Liberal Arts Revitalization Committee (LARC), which sponsors contests and activities in the traditional disciplines, the development of an Accelerated Business Management Program, National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation for our Early Childhood Education program, Writing, Math, and Oral Communication Across the Curriculum initiatives. Faculty members have promoted cross-curricular activities, such as the annual "theme across the curriculum" associated with our Top Notch theater productions (e.g., *The Triangle Factory* Project and *The Diary of Anne Frank*), along with debates, book discussions, and other theme-based activities. Several faculty members have established strong connections to the community, completing service learning projects with Emmaus House (a local homeless shelter), Habitat for Humanity, and Lawrence Community Action Head Start. In the Spring 09 semester, fourteen faculty members did service learning projects with their classes. In addition, faculty members have sought out ways to connect classroom learning to community-related activities; examples include a tree survey project between the city of Newburyport and our science classes, and an entrepreneurship panel introducing local business owners to our business students. Faculty have also been involved with the college's collaboration efforts with Methuen and Amesbury High Schools. Faculty members have written and received numerous grants including a National Science Foundation lab improvement grant, and National Endowment for Humanities grant to study Shakespeare, and an ATLAS (Advancing Technological Literacy and Skills) grant, a collaboration between NECC and the Boston Museum of Science. Faculty have also supervised student field trips, both local and distant, with

direct links to curriculum. Probably the most notable of these has been a summer field trip to Ecuador which was organized as a credited component of a biology course.

ADVISING

Great strides have been made in the area of academic advising, especially in regard to new faculty training and online advising, and student academic planning. Still some challenges remain. Full-time faculty are given a list of 18 students to advise, but typically see only half of them in face-to-face meetings. Advising lists change from semester to semester, so there is a lack of continuity in advisor-advisee contact and relationship. Some faculty are also concerned that increasing opportunities for online registration will further diminish relationships between students and their faculty advisors. The advising center and the administration is currently attempting to address these concerns.

ADJUNCT FACULTY SUPPORT

While increasing its number of full-time faculty, NECC has also been making a concerted effort to increase support for adjunct faculty members and encourage them to become involved with campus life. Virtually all professional development opportunities available to full-time faculty are now also available to adjuncts. A special orientation for new adjunct faculty has been implemented. All adjuncts are given an NECC phone number and e-mail account, which means that they receive the same college-wide communications as full time faculty.

Some challenges do remain. While adjuncts have phone numbers, most do not have their own phones. While some type of office space is made available to adjuncts, many share small spaces that are not always available to them. The office space problem is particularly acute on the Lawrence campus.

The contract between the Massachusetts Community College Council (MCCC), the labor union representing full-time and part-time faculty, and the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, which represents all of the public colleges in the state, contains some differences between full- and part-time faculty. For example, part-time faculty are required to make up any hour of class they miss, while full-time faculty are not, and student evaluation forms required by the two bargaining agreements are also different. Additionally, the MCCC is seeking health care benefits for part-time faculty from the State of Massachusetts. These issues are beyond the control of individual colleges, but are of interest to part-time faculty at NECC and elsewhere in the state.

GOVERNANCE

Faculty are welcomed and encouraged to participate in virtually all relevant governance organizations and processes at NECC. There are clearly defined positions for faculty in all of the standing committees of the All College Assembly, and faculty are routinely asked to serve on ad hoc committees or newly created work groups, such as the Information Technology Committee, Facilities Committee, and various Achieving the Dream strategy teams. Beyond these formal roles on committees, the college regularly opens planning processes up to the entire institution, including faculty. The 2007 Strategic Planning process was open to every employee at the college, and many faculty served in leadership roles to create the Academic Master Plan. Process Management teams are open to faculty involvement, and any employee at the college, including faculty, may suggest Process Management topics.

Nonetheless, some full-time faculty are skeptical about the value of ACA committee work, and each standing committee has at least one vacant faculty seat. NECC, like most colleges, also struggles with the number of adjunct faculty who participate regularly in governance activities. The reality of having two distinct campuses, with faculty based on each, has also added a complication to faculty participation in governance.

At the same time, many faculty are feeling the strain of having too many demands or expectations placed upon them at once. Major initiatives such as the Academic Master Plan and Achieving the Dream may be critical to the academic vitality of the college and the success of our students, with a five course teaching load for full-time faculty, many feel that they are being asked to take on more committee work and project participation than their schedules allow. While faculty are never required to work beyond their contractual obligation, some find themselves caught in the dilemma of choosing between overextending themselves and declining to participate in activities which may directly affect their work lives.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Faculty and staff development is a priority at NECC, as evidenced by the extensive opportunities offered through the OFSD, and the faculty's enthusiastic pursuit of professional growth. The majority of full-time faculty members and a significant number of adjunct faculty participate in professional development and value the opportunities that the OFSD offers. When surveyed, department chairs and program coordinators were universally positive about the OFSD and its offerings. Faculty believe that the OFSD is supported by the president, as indicated by a full-time dean and assistant, and the addition this year of a faculty fellow. It is to NECC's credit that when faced with significant budget cuts in FY-2009, the college did not place a blanket freeze on professional development activities and travel. This decision reflects both the administration's commitment to support faculty professional development, and the faculty's commitment to pursue professional development for the benefit of the institution as well as their own professional growth.

NECC has also been successfully creating forums that provide structured opportunities for our faculty to learn from their colleagues. Each spring, NECC offers faculty members a unique opportunity during Professional Development Day when faculty are encouraged to offer workshops in which they share new learning with their peers. Collegial Conversations, TIC, and the new SFIGs are other examples of venues for faculty on our campuses to learn from each other. Faculty who participate in these activities report a high degree of satisfaction with them.

Institutional Effectiveness

As described above, the college has spent considerable time in recent years assessing the sufficiency of, and support for, faculty; as a result we have significantly increased the number of full-time faculty, and the percentage of courses taught by full-time faculty at the institution. The institution administers periodic surveys related to faculty support for and effectiveness of academic advising and professional development activities; and as a result of data analysis through one of our Key Performance Indicators (Diversity), we recently made significant changes to the faculty position selection and hiring processes.

In the area of instruction, the college regularly administers three evaluation tools to assess effectiveness and student satisfaction: classroom evaluations, the Community College Survey of Student

Engagement, and graduate surveys. Information from each of these is used in planning for faculty hiring, professional development, and promotion; and for making improvements to college support services for faculty.

Projection

- Hiring full-time faculty will remain a priority at the college and in academic affairs, especially in light of increased enrollments. The college will continue toward the goal of 65% of daytime courses taught by full-time faculty.
- As the budget allows, the college will attempt to achieve increases in the number and percentage of minority faculty at the college over the next three years.
- Recognizing the difficult budget environment in which the college will be operating, the college will expand its professional development activities for faculty by focusing on faculty-teaching-faculty workshops and coaching activities.
- The college will provide more, and more advanced, training for faculty teaching in online and hybrid courses.
- Through ATD work, and with the leadership of the Learning Communities Committee, the college will identify the most effective and efficient means of offering Learning Communities; and develop a commonly understood and applied method of assessing their effectiveness.
- The college will increase opportunities for adjunct faculty engagement, with a particular emphasis on professional development and ATD student success initiatives.
- DegreeWorks will be used to improve both the frequency and quality of faculty advisor-student advisee contacts.
- The dean of advising will conduct a review of the process for assigning advisees, and determine if improvements can be made.

STANDARD 6: STUDENTS

Strengths	Challenges
Award-winning One-Stop Center Varied and Multi-leveled Student Support Services Recognition of Student Strengths and Leadership Foster and Nurture Student Engagement	Limited resources of staff, time and funding

Description

ADMISSIONS AND ASSESSMENT

Northern Essex Community College (NECC) has an open admissions policy and accepts students on a first-come, first-served basis for most programs. Some majors are criteria-based and have special admission requirements and/or limited enrollment. Admission requirements for these programs are explained in each program's criteria packet which is given to all students who display an interest in one or more of these programs.

The college accepts without discrimination all applicants meeting the admission standards. Matriculated students must show that they have graduated from an accredited high school, received a General Educational Development Certificate (GED), or can pass the federally approved Ability-to-Benefit test.

NECC attracts students in many ways, including visits to area high schools, campus tours, mass mailings, and e-mail correspondence. Weekly information sessions are held on Tuesday evenings at the Haverhill campus and on Thursday evenings at the Lawrence campus. During these information sessions, enrollment counselors explain the admission, financial aid, registration, and assessment processes to prospective students.

The Ourania Behrakis Student Center, a state-of-the-art one-stop student center, opened in the fall of 2005. The enrollment services that were once housed in separate offices across the campus are now provided in a single two-story building. The Lawrence campus has a smaller version of the One-Stop Center offering the same services.

In order to better serve students, the college has implemented a document imaging system. All relevant documents, including high school and college transcripts and many financial aid documents are

now scanned and imaged to allow remote viewing by academic and financial aid counselors, as well as program coordinators at the Haverhill and Lawrence campuses. Easier access facilitates quick approval of financial aid applications and verification of student information needed for acceptance into criteria-based programs.

The college is committed to student success by ensuring that every student completes a skills assessment using the Accuplacer tests. Results of reading, writing, and math skills assessments provide us with information for appropriate course placements for new students. If students require testing accommodations for learning, hearing, or other disabilities, the Learning Accommodation Center provides supportive assistance.

Non-matriculated students are allowed to register for up to six credits, prior to assessment. However, all students are required to assess prior to enrolling in reading, writing, math, and ESL courses; and all other courses with entrance level skills requirements.

RETENTION AND GRADUATION SUPPORT

Developmental programs and services address the needs of students who enter the college with skill deficits. This area includes the Department of Developmental Studies which provides the following courses: Basic Writing, Basic Reading, Basic Reading Lab, College Reading, Basic Math, Basic Algebra I, Basic Algebra II, all the courses in the ESL sequence and all the courses in the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Cluster. It also includes the Adult Literacy and Transition Program.

Four Learning Centers are also part of the developmental education area: the English Language Center, the Math Center, the Reading Center and the Writing Center. Services are available to all students on a drop-in basis, both day and evening in Haverhill and Lawrence.

- The English Language Center provides tutorials, enrichment exercises, and guidance while students are enrolled in ESL classes, as well as assistance to those who have completed ESL classes and passed into the mainstream college.
- The Math Center provides individual and group tutoring to students enrolled in the developmental math courses and addresses specific needs such as math anxiety, calculator use, or questions about the math course sequence.
- The Reading Center provides individual tutoring to students enrolled in the Basic Reading classes, the Basic Reading labs, and College Reading classes. The staff helps students develop the academic skills needed to make them stronger readers.
- The Writing Center provides individualized tutoring in all stages of the writing process, primarily to students enrolled in Basic Writing, but also to former basic writers enrolled in other NECC courses, so that the inexperienced writer becomes more confident.

Students in college level classes may utilize the Academic Resource & Tutoring Center (ARTC) and the newly opened Math Resource and Tutoring Center. Tutorials are offered free of charge to all our students in college-level writing and math, accounting, science, and computers. The ARTC subscribes to the Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI), an online evaluation tool, which helps students identify their strengths and weaknesses relative to strategic learning. In addition to the walk-in tutoring that is offered across the main subject areas, students are encouraged to submit requests to form study groups with their peers. A peer tutor leads study groups at a time that is mutually convenient to their members, one to two hours per week. The Academic Resource &

Tutoring Center also coordinates Supplemental Instruction. Online tutoring is also available through SmartThinking, a nationally recognized online tutoring service. All centers and tutors adhere to the National Tutoring Association's Code of Ethics.

The Learning Accommodations Center provides equal access for students with documented disabilities. It provides contacts at both the Haverhill and Lawrence campuses, services students enrolled in credit and noncredit courses, and offers consultation and training to staff, faculty, administrators, students and the community about the college's legal obligations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) 1990, Title II. The Learning Accommodations Center determines the accommodations that provide equal access for students with a wide range of disabilities, including learning disabilities, Attention Deficit Disorder, psychiatric disorders, physical disabilities and certain medical conditions, blind/ low vision, brain injury, Asperger's Syndrome and Autism spectrum disorders. Documentation and interviews are used to assess individual needs and determine reasonable accommodations.

NECC's longstanding commitment to students who are deaf and hard of hearing is evidenced by our comprehensive approach to serving this population. The Deaf Studies Program is the only publicly funded training program for sign language interpreters and paraprofessionals in Massachusetts. Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (DHHS) coordinates interpreting services for ongoing classes, tutorials, advising sessions, meetings, co-curricular activities and any programs or services provided by the college. All NECC interpreters are professionals who are certified by the National Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, or who have passed a state quality assurance screening. Computer Aided Real Time Captioning (CART) is provided as requested. Approval of services through DHH Services Office is required prior to delivery of services. NECC is also home to the Gallaudet University Regional Center which brings resources of the world's only liberal arts university for deaf and hard of hearing people to the northeast region through training workshops, technical assistance, and extension courses.

NECC is a GED testing site. The Adult Literacy and Transition Programs offer an Adult Basic Education site in Amesbury, MA, for students who need the skills to enable them to pass the GED. We also offer English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes at our Lawrence campus as well as ESOL classes that target family day care providers.

FINANCIAL AID

NECC is committed to providing access to higher education by reducing economic barriers. Financial aid staff provides information about student aid programs and assists eligible students in accessing these programs. While all one-stop staff are trained to assist students with basic financial aid questions, financial aid counselors are specialists in the field and are members of the Massachusetts Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (MASFAA). The staff regularly attends conferences, training sessions, and workshops to keep current with the ever-changing state and federal regulations. Most of the financial aid staff also speak Spanish. All students are encouraged to apply for financial aid.

In addition, the college also participates in the annual College Goal Sunday, a national initiative sponsored by the MASFAA. College Goal Sunday is held at the Lawrence campus every January. Financial Aid professionals assist parents and students in understanding the benefits of completing the Free Application for Federal Student

Aid (FAFSA) and provide help with completing it in English or Spanish. Since 2007, 98% of NECC students receiving financial aid have completed the FAFSA online. However, all students may come in to the One-Stop Student Centers in Haverhill or Lawrence to receive any assistance with completing financial aid paperwork.

The U.S. Department of Education requires that all students receiving financial aid be making satisfactory academic progress (SAP) toward their course of study. Our SAP standards comply with the federal regulations and financial aid counselors work closely with academic advising staff to review student progress on both sets of standards. The specific standards for SAP are identified under Financial Aid section in the college's catalog, advising handbook and on the website.

NECC participates in a number of financial aid programs including grants, loans, federal work-study, and scholarships that are need-based and merit. Student financial aid is provided through a well-organized program, and awards are based on clear and publicly available criteria. The steps and information regarding financial aid are well publicized on the college website, in the NECC Catalog, and the Academic Advising Handbook.

GENERAL STUDENT SERVICES

The Division of Enrollment Management and Student Services (EMSS) support the mission of the college by aligning its goals with the strategic plan of the college. Annual budgeting and planning for budget reductions is led by the executive vice president and her leadership team with input from every department. Programs and services are framed and continually improved to enhance a learning-centered environment for students. Planning and monthly reviews of our progress occur in every department and in management meetings.

All EMSS departments engage in numerous assessments, external reviews, surveys, and evaluations of their impact on students. To illustrate our understanding and continual use of assessment, each EMSS department has prepared a recent case study example of how data is gathered and drives subsequent decisions about future change and improvements. (Each case study has been compiled and is provided in a separate binder called Enrollment Management and Student Services Research Reports as a resource for the visiting team. Exhibit Hard Copy 2-EMSS Binder).

HEALTH AND SAFETY

College safety is, of course, a priority. Campus security personnel are on duty 24 hours daily at the Haverhill campus and during operating hours at the Lawrence campus to assist students with minor emergencies or to intercede until local authorities arrive in the event of a more serious incident.

In May of 2007, following the incident at Virginia Polytechnic Institute, a Campus Safety Response Team (CSRT) comprised of administrators, faculty and staff was formed to address concerns about violence prevention. Three subcommittees emerged with separate tasks: the communications subcommittee created information for our website, and participated in the implementation of the Emergency Notification System and has created a report explaining the team's work . The Care and Concern Outreach Team was assembled, with membership from Human Resources, Student Services, Student Discipline, and faculty; it meets regularly with faculty and students who have been referred for threat assessment. The Training subcommittee sponsors speakers and information sessions about violence prevention.

On August 4, 2008, NECC joined BeSafe. When first responders are called to the college, the information provided by BeSafe,

including floor plans, utility connections, classroom, lab and office configurations, digital photos, and evacuation routes, allows them to make critical, well-informed decisions quickly. Our protocol for crisis management has also been revised. This document, which is available both on the web and in print, provides instructions for faculty, staff, and students to follow in a variety of emergency situations: if imminent danger is perceived, if a student is exhibiting signs of emotional distress, if discipline issues arise, or if students under academic pressure need referrals.

The college is not residential and has no Student Health Service, though it is obligated to provide immunization compliance reports to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health on students in Allied Health programs and all full time students. In addition, the college has arranged for consultation with Middlesex Community College's Health Service if questions or policy changes arise. Student Health Insurance is mandatory for all full time students and the same QSHP policy is offered to all state community college students.

In response to wide-spread concern about the H1N1 flu, the college has created a flu task force, which maintains a website with the latest national and state information and provides notification forms so that the college can better track the spread of the flu.

Beginning in September of 2009, NECC became a smoke free campus, recognizing the medical evidence that indicates that smoking is a serious health hazard, and that this hazard includes those exposed to secondhand smoke.

ACADEMIC ADVISING AND CAREER PLANNING

The Career Planning & Advising Center (CPAC) provides an array of services for students, including student advising, registration, assisting with web registration, and campus tours. In addition to the functions of the Advising Center, the CPAC arranges career planning workshops, cooperative education opportunities, mentoring, the Disney Program, high school partnerships and articulation agreements through Tech Prep, GED preparation and testing, and community service learning opportunities. In both the Haverhill and Lawrence campuses, professional social services counselors are available to assist students with personal and educational problems.

All staff leading direct student services have a minimum of a master's degree with several having doctoral degrees and several years of relevant experience working in higher education. Eighty-four percent of all personnel in EMSS have college degrees and many have participated in the Community College Leadership Academy or in NECC's Leadership Academy. A minimum of a master's degree for all professional staff is the goal of EMSS executive leadership. College funding has been adequate in the past and heavily supplemented by federal, state, and private external funding for special programs or services. Facilities and technology have been acquired through considerable fund raising and grant writing and provide resources for staff to work effectively with students.

In 2006, the college launched MyNECC, an online self-service feature for students and faculty. The software allows students to register for classes, access grades, perform program audits, and print unofficial transcripts and course schedules. Students can also view their semester bill, their financial aid award and the Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy.

ETHICAL BEHAVIOR

Each EMSS department complies with the ethical standards of its

particular discipline. Learning Accommodations and Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services are further guided by licensure and certification requirements. Athletics must comply with the national association standards of their sport. Most recently Financial Aid has distributed new ethical standards which all staff are required to follow.

In fall 2008, the College adopted its new Student Code of Conduct developed by legal counsel and used by all Massachusetts Community Colleges. The Student Grievance Procedure and Disciplinary Process, including the complaint and appeal mechanisms, are contained in the publication Student Code of Conduct and NECC Policies & Procedures. It is widely available in hard copy, given to all new students, shared again with any student referred for discipline or pursuing a grievance, and is posted on the college's website. The disciplinary process is clearly outlined, and where possible, minor disputes are informally resolved. Special attention is paid to ensure that students have due process. Students who violate the Code of Conduct have an opportunity to resolve the case administratively or to use a formal hearing board.

As stated in the Student Code of Conduct, in order to ensure diversity on campus, students, faculty, staff, and visitors must be free from conduct which has the purpose or effect of interfering with an individual's academic or professional performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or demeaning educational or employment environment. The college unequivocally condemns intolerance based on ethnicity, religion, cultural heritage, race, disability, sex or sexual orientation.

The college is committed to protecting the security, confidentiality, and integrity of student records. The college follows the standards of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974, as amended, which insures confidentiality of educational records and prescribes the conditions under which information about students can be released to the student, parents or guardians, and authorized third parties. In addition, the act defines the general record keeping requirements that the institution must maintain to ensure accuracy and access of student educational data. Information regarding FERPA is outlined in the college catalog, and college policies relating to FERPA are maintained by the college registrars.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

At Northern Essex, orientation is reviewed as an ongoing process with a series of stages: Initial Contact, Transitioning In, Getting Connected and Moving Ahead, and Transitioning Out. This "Just-in-time" model gives students the information appropriate for that particular stage of the enrollment process. Each stage can involve several different departments sharing information and enlightening a student about the college and our processes and procedures.

A complete description of the NECC orientation process is available in the Additional Resources section, and from the Student Engagement Center.

In the summer of 2008, after various models were reviewed and researched, a new Early Connection Program was launched by the Student Engagement Center. In its first year the Early Connection Program focused on the Achieving the Dream (ATD) cohort, first-time, full-time new students under the age of 24, contacting them after they had registered for classes but before the semester began. As a rule, students are contacted by Student Orientation Leaders (SOLs) by e-mail and phone, and invited them to attend a two-hour workshop that explains career planning, classroom expectations, college resources, etc. SOLs maintain contact with this same cohort by e-mail throughout the summer and finally send an invitation to

attend Welcome Week activities when the semester begins.

During Welcome Week, information tables are set up in strategic locations on the Haverhill and Lawrence campuses. Welcome Week activities continue during the first four weeks of the semester and include Student Success Workshops, the College Life and Campus Services Fair, job fairs, academic and other departmental open houses, and more. Almost all activities are offered on both campuses, with the exception of certain open houses.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

The Student Engagement Center offers numerous opportunities for student development, engagement, and leadership through extracurricular activities. The center presents workshops, fairs, and other events to help foster student life at the college. The Student Engagement Center has seen an increase in participation since the department was relocated to the Sport & Fitness Center. For example, the college now has 23 active clubs (up from 18 in 2001), and participation in student clubs has increased 237%, from 231 students in 2001 to 548 today.

NECC's 23 clubs include Parnassus (our award-winning literary magazine), Amnesty International, Tertulias Book Club, Gay/Straight Alliance, Dance Club (the Stillpoint Dancers) and many others. The process clubs/organizations are required to follow when launching are included in the Club and Organization Handbook . This paperwork includes a membership roster, current officer listing, and Hazing Disclosure.

The Women's Network (Haverhill) and Tertulias Book Club (Lawrence) are both support networks that offer many workshops with over 100 women attending each year. Formerly programs, both were recently transitioned to student organization status.

The Student Engagement Center recruits students to serve on the Student Senate, our Student Government Association. Membership of the Student Senate is comprised of 15 students representing the various academic programs, the 5 largest clubs, and 5 seats for students in the leadership program. The senate has weekly meetings that are held via video teleconference on both campuses. The senate makes an annual budget recommendation to the college for allocation of student activity funds to clubs and organizations and three Student Life offices (Student Engagement Center, Athletics & Recreation, and Wellness & Fitness Center). All new student organizations and club must be approved by the senate and must register annually with the Student Engagement Center.

The Student Engagement Center coordinates the Student Leadership Development Program, which has received awards from both the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) and National Council on Student Development (NCSD). Students may be nominated for the program by faculty or staff, or may be invited through their involvement in athletics, student government, co-curricular activities, English as a Second Language (Level 4 and 5 only), or the Dean's List. This program provides leadership workshops, a community service component, and optional team building activities. Students who complete all program requirements are eligible to become Presidential Student Ambassadors, who serve as liaisons at college events, and are recognized at the Annual Awards Convocation and by a transcript notation.

The Wellness & Fitness Center is an exercise facility on the Haverhill campus that is free and open to all college community members. The center provides wellness programming, such as healthy eating and stress management. The center also serves as a learning laboratory for students in the Sport, Fitness & Leisure Studies (SFLS)

program. The students staff the center, lead exercise orientations, lead exercise classes and provide personal training, and work in outreach programs with the local community. The Lawrence campus students and staff use the Lawrence YMCA.

The Athletic Department offers a wide variety of co-ed, intramural and recreational programs throughout the year, and is open to all students, faculty and staff. Our facilities are located in and around the Sport and Fitness Center on the Haverhill campus. A game room with board games, pool and ping-pong tables, and other equipment, as well as a snack bar and lounge area is available. Off campus recreational activities are also planned throughout the semester. An average of 886 students per month used the recreation area during the fall 2008 semester.

We offer an inter-collegiate athletic program in six varsity sports: women's volleyball, men's and women's basketball, men's baseball and men's and women's track and field. The intercollegiate athletic program is governed by the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) and all student-athletes are required to meet certain eligibility standards. Our athletic teams compete locally in the Massachusetts Community College Athletic Conference (MCCAC).

While the college does not have stated institutional goals for students' co-curricular learning, each EMSS department that provides co-curricular experiences has goals for their programs and services. Co-operative experiential placements are highly formalized as part of the academic programs. Community service learning and the student leadership development program are well established co-curricular programs. Student clubs and organizations are more informal. Student Senate leadership training is being revised to become much more formal.

Appraisal

ADMISSIONS AND ASSESSMENT

The most widely recognized success has been the consolidation of Enrollment Services to ease the admission and registration process for new students. The Behrakis One Stop Student Center has been used as a model for many community colleges that have sent visiting teams to discuss both the building features and the functional service centers. The smaller Lawrence center has been able to serve over 12,000 students and families annually. Cross-training of staff has increased each year, and as a result, staff members are able to field a variety of questions from walk-in students, as well as cover multiple topics during high school recruiting events or community speaking engagements. Our students rated our enrollment services at 95% satisfaction in 2007-2008 on the CCSSE.

Technology has been of great assistance to students, particularly the recent implementation of web self-service capabilities. Financial Aid Self Service has allowed our limited Financial Aid staff to concentrate on aid packaging while students can their check award status on line. All departments could benefit by further technological upgrades, however. On-line applications would help with data entry processing and expanded document imaging could help program coordinators deliver faster decisions for criteria programs.

While the college has had a strong assessment and placement process for many years, the college recently changed our writing testing instrument to the Writeplacer series in order to speed the delivery of placement results and align ourselves with other Massachusetts colleges. Redefining test scores to reflect proper course placement with a new instrument involved careful research on the impact of students. The college plans to continue monitoring placement scores and success rates.

RETENTION AND GRADUATION SUPPORT

The college regularly tracks and disseminates retention and graduation data. The Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE) has required annual reporting from all state community colleges on numerous performance measures which include rates of retention and graduation. The annual reports are shared broadly across campus, with the college's board of trustees, in community forums and on our website. In addition to DHE required measures, the college has always reported on additional Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Now that the college has completed its first full year as one of the four ATD colleges in Massachusetts, we are looking closely at all measures of student success.

In spring 2009, 650 students participated in the CCSSE and when asked about financial aid advising, indicated we had improved substantially in two years, increasing the amount of "very" or "somewhat" satisfied by 10 points. However, with the reduction in state support and in donations to the college, fewer discretionary funds are available to assist students who are either ineligible for financial aid or receive only minimal assistance. In fall 2009, many students needed more funding for books and living expenses because the course fee increases used up their limited financial aid awards.

Retention at NECC is one of the highest priorities. In an effort to understand why students persist, we conducted a focus group with the ATD Initiative "Student Perspectives on Persistence and Success." The results indicated that more attention should be directed toward peer support systems, such as mentoring, and provide structured opportunities for students to connect with one another. Moreover, the focus group found that by creating more conversations between faculty/staff and students, the college may be able to influence students who may not have an intrinsic level of motivation to persist.

Developmental programs and services for students at NECC are one of the college's strengths. NECC has a thriving array of support centers for both developmental and college-level students. According to 2009 CCSSE results, the college is making progress in facilitating student support services and when asked about their satisfaction of these services, we had improved 5 points, increasing the amount of "very" or "somewhat satisfied" responses to above the national average. In addition, a random sampling of students participated in a survey of the Writing, Reading, and Math Centers in which they rated their satisfaction and then created a simile to compare the support they received to something in everyday life. The results were quite positive and the similes in particular provide a good lens into student perception. (Exhibit 6-1- Questionnaire, located on Student NEASC blog.) In the near future, the interim assistant dean of Developmental Education will be conducting a research project to correlate and measure the impact of student use of ESL and the Developmental Reading, Writing, and Math labs on student retention and course completion rates.

The Academic Resource and Tutoring Center (ARTC) is comparatively new, having been established in 2005. While the college provided peer tutors for several years before that, the center provided a centralized base for tutors and tutees, regular hours of operation, and some continuity of staff. In the ensuing years, the ARTC has grown and proven to be a valuable resource for our students. In the spring 2009, total hours students spent in the ARTC for subjects other than Math were calculated at over 1100. The Math Tutoring and Resource Center on its own logged almost another 1100 student contact hours.

GENERAL STUDENT SERVICES

The impact of budget cuts on student services is a concern. As a result of FY-2010 budget cuts and reduced grant funding, the EMSS division lost twelve full and part-time positions and grant funds from Title V and Massachusetts Department of Mental Health exceeding $450,000.

EMSS is reviewing how best to deliver career planning to more students. Since the One Stop Center opened career planning functions have been more broadly distributed. Some career planning is now done in academic coursework, in the Student Success workshops, the College Success course, through Student Life programming, and various grant programs. The Commonwealth is also developing a web component, and we want to take advantage of the many web resources available. Currently, Massachusetts Community Colleges are sending staff to each other, as we all are exploring better ways to deliver this information to students.

The new ADA Amendments Act of 2008 expanded the disability protection so it is expected that an increase in the number of students with disabilities will be seen and the Learning Accommodations Center may be hard pressed to support them. Grants that were available in the past have been eliminated due to state budget cuts.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Coordinating facilities continues to be a challenge for programming certain campus/college events. Despite the existence of a designated "college meeting hour," courses continue to be scheduled during that time. With an increasing enrollment, space for club and organization activities is harder to find.

Improving communication between the Student Engagement Center and the college community is a goal for future growth and development. Online opportunities, such as Facebook and others, have been helpful communication tools in the past to disseminate information about events and increase participation.

In spring 2010, the Student Affairs Committee will implement a "Student of the Month" award. Faculty and staff can nominate and recognize students for being active and engaged learners, demonstrating leadership, and/or helping other students. At the end of the academic year, a "Student of the Year" will be nominated out of the monthly pool.

The Wellness and Fitness Center has been able to meet the demands of the college community in providing significant hours of operation. According to surveys taken by the Wellness and Fitness Center, an average of over 50 participants use the center each day: 60% of the users are full time students, 23% are part-time students, 12% are college staff and 5% are guests.

The challenge for the Athletic Department has always been how to attract more female student-athletes. There is extra emphasis on recruiting female athletes and trying to make the programs less time-consuming while maintaining a high level of competitiveness.

Learning outcomes for students' co-curricular learning were attempted at one point by Student Life and without any institutional requirement program goals were implemented wherever possible.

Institutional Effectiveness

All of NECC's Enrollment Management and Student Services (EMSS) departments engage in numerous assessments, external reviews, surveys and evaluations of their impact on students. To illustrate divisional understanding and continual use of assessment, each department has prepared a recent case study example of how data is gathered and drives subsequent decisions about future change and

improvements. Each case study has been compiled and is provided in a separate binder called Enrollment Management and Student Services Research Reports as a resource for the visiting team.

Projections

- Where possible and appropriate, faculty training will be added to the ongoing cross-training of One-Stop Center and Student Services staff.
- The college will implement automated packaging and more sophisticated SAP reporting in Financial Aid during 2010-2011.
- On line applications and other on line fee payments require the discovery of a cost effective method or product or a change in business practices. These issues will be reviewed and resolved by 2011-2012.
- As part of NECC's ATD initiative, the college will implement revised cut-off scores for mathematics placement in fall 2010, and continue review of reading and writing placements during 2010-2011.
- By 2012, the college will develop a more cost effective method to deliver career planning to students and implement web assisted services.
- The college will develop a long-range plan to identify funding to assist students with the greatest need for local financial aid.
- A plan to broaden the cohort for orientations and to create a communications plan to increase participation will be piloted in FY-2011 and grown annually.
- Over the next three years, the Student Engagement Center will improve communication through the creation of a blog and online information about upcoming events through an online calendar.
- The college will establish a process management team to recommend how to institute institutional learning outcomes for students' co-curricular learning college-wide.

STANDARD 7: LIBRARY AND OTHER INFORMATION RESOURCES

Strengths	Challenges
Center for Instructional Technology	Limited space for Lawrence Library
Helpful, knowledgeable, and adaptable Library staff	Improve cycle for updating Library technology
Increased use of electronic journals and databases	Integrate information literacy into the curriculum
Well-developed information literacy instruction program	

Description

At Northern Essex Community College (NECC), library and information resources are a crucial component of the college's mission of optimal academic performance and student success.

LIBRARY

On the Haverhill campus, the Bentley Library building houses the main library, the library instructional classroom and the campus Media Services office and labs. On the Lawrence campus, a smaller library specializing in health sciences and law is located on the lower level of the building. Wireless Internet access is available in the libraries for students who have registered for a wireless internet account through the Information Technology Services (IT) department.

The Bentley Library has holdings of more than 65,000 volumes, while the Lawrence campus library contains more than 10,000 volumes. An integrated online catalog provides access to library materials and maintains circulation and cataloging records. Library and information resources at NECC are readily available to students at the Haverhill and Lawrence campuses and through a comprehensive and interactive website. Students can register in person or online for a library card. The NECC library card number entitles the student to full library privileges, including off-site access to subscription databases via the Internet, patron-initiated request capability for North of Boston Library Exchange (NOBLE) and Virtual Catalog resources, and walk-in privileges at NOBLE and Massachusetts public college libraries.

The libraries are staffed by the full-time equivalent (FTE) of nine

full-time librarians and paraprofessionals. Of these, 5.8 FTE are professional librarians holding master's degrees in Library and Information Science (Data/First). At least one professional librarian qualified to provide reference assistance to students, faculty, and staff is scheduled to be present at all hours the libraries are open. The technical services and circulation areas are staffed by qualified full- and part-time paraprofessionals.

Training and support in the use of library resources is made available to faculty, students, and staff through library instruction sessions offered at both campuses, and through online instruction and tutorials on the library website. Library liaisons may also be requested to provide supplemental classroom instruction for specialized projects or for research in general. The library's website has been designed to support the information needs of the college's students, faculty, and staff. The Research Aides and Tutorials webpage provides access to information literacy skills tutorials designed to assist students with research tools. Library staff regularly evaluate and revise the website's content and style to maintain its quality, clarity, and simplicity. Reference librarians act as added support on an individual basis and reply to e-mail inquiries received through 'Ask a Librarian' link on the website as well as respond to telephone inquiries. New faculty orientation includes information on library services.

The library has policies regarding the appropriate use of computers and technology systems. These policies are designed to address a diverse set of parameters, including, but not limited to, eligibility for access to computers and networks, acceptable and unacceptable use of library computer stations, acceptable use of e-mail, time limitations on use, printing policies, access to software and hardware, equipment reservation and loan, and software loan policies. Additional usage issues not specifically addressed by either the library or the Center for Instructional Technology and Distance Learning (CIT) can be viewed online at the College Policies & Student Code of Conduct webpage and is published in the Student Handbook under the heading "College Statements, Policies, & Disclosures." These policies address enforcement of guidelines, use priority, privacy policies, security, eligibility for and cost of accounts, electronic mail policies (which covers acceptable uses and suggested guidelines for sending and receiving e-mail), use of the Internet and World Wide Web access, and copyright infringement. Policies addressing the use of resources other than computers and wireless networks (i.e. books, movies, and print journals) are listed on the NECC Library Policies webpage.

INSTRUCTIONAL AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The Center for Instructional Technology is actively involved in college wide strategic planning, which includes annual initiatives and goals directly related to measuring and improving instructional and information technology resources and services for the NECC community. It is staffed by a director holding a master's in Media Production, two professional instructional designers with appropriate advanced degrees, and two qualified paraprofessional staff members, and provides instructional technology support services to the college's faculty and staff.

Faculty are encouraged to develop distance learning versions of their courses, and training and assistance are available to support them in this endeavor. Services include one-on-one coaching, demonstrations, and course development tools and materials. Staff assist faculty in the design of online courses and the creation of faculty websites. They also demonstrate techniques to enhance traditional face-to-face courses utilizing electronic presentations or interactive learning modules. New faculty members receive an orientation with CIT and are informed of all services that are offered. Every

spring, CIT runs iTEACH, a semester-long faculty development program that trains its participants in designing pedagogically sound and interactive online or hybrid courses. Faculty participants meet as a group once or twice a month throughout the semester and conclude with a three day showcase at semester's end. Faculty are encouraged to meet with CIT between scheduled sessions for individual coaching, building strong partnerships with CIT staff. CIT staff offer assistance and consultation to faculty after the course is up and running as well as during its creation. Additionally, stand-alone workshops geared towards maximizing instructional effectiveness are offered. A listing of workshops can be viewed at the CIT web site. The website also provides online tutorials.

CIT also provides assistance with e-tutoring initiatives and works with the Learning Accommodations Center staff to ensure that distance courses are accessible to students who require accommodations. CIT staff actively promotes the concept of "Universal Design" in the creation of online courses and faculty websites. CIT has developed a video tutorial on its Distance Learning Web site to help students familiarize themselves with the distance learning experience. The Helpdesk, part of the college's IT department, provides walk-in, phone and e-mail support to students on both the Haverhill and Lawrence campus. The Media and Video Services branch of CIT provides media support and materials for classroom and special events.

The college uses Banner, an administrative software system, to address many institutional needs ranging from student services to finance services and human resources. College room requests are scheduled through Banner, providing a centralized location for booking rooms and a website that displays their availability. In FY-2007, electronic survey capabilities were implemented in Banner, supporting student elections, a student satisfaction survey, and the appreciative inquiry interviewing process in its first year of use. In September 2007, the college added *Provide Support,* a web-based application, providing secure synchronous and asynchronous online advising, and enabling advisors to better assist distance learners. A college-wide Emergency Notification System was implemented in September 2008, allowing members of the college community to receive safety and emergency text messages on their mobile devices.

Banner also interfaces with other software systems, such as the college's course management system. In January 2008, the college completed a transition of its online course delivery system from Web CT to Blackboard Campus Edition. A Windows Media Server was launched with a customized faculty control panel and secure login feature. Faculty can now post streaming audio and video content, including providing podcasts to students. Additionally, in the summer 2009, CIT performed upgrades to faculty websites. Now powered by WordPress, they include new features such as the option to add a blog allowing for student comments to be moderated and posted, student subscription to faculty Posts and Comments feeds, and a "Share This" button allowing linkage to Facebook, Twitter, and other social networking sites.

Banner Self Service, a web-based tool implemented in 2005, allows enrolled students, faculty, and staff access to information, resources and services online. Faculty submit grades and students access them through this application, as well. According to NECC's "Report on the Status of Support Services Provided to Online Students," approved by NEASC in 2007, more than 80 percent of students used Banner Self-Service during the spring semester in 2007.

Appraisal

LIBRARY

The Libraries' mission and vision as stated in the FY-2008/2012 Long Range Plan indicates a commitment to providing the environment and resources necessary to support the college's goals of student success and faculty and staff development. The long range plan clearly articulates the libraries' goals in the areas of information literacy, circulation and access services, collections, technology, library environment, space needs, and communication.

The libraries' strong connection with the academic departments through the library liaison initiative, the Academic Affairs Committee, and other avenues allows the libraries to stay abreast of new courses and trends. Academic needs are supported by a 75,000 volume book collection, as well as access to the collections of the twenty-seven member libraries of NOBLE . Electronic resources play an increasingly important role in student research. A wide variety of databases provide access to thousands of journals and other full-text resources and are easily accessible to registered students both on and off campus via the library website. In 2009, the library added a collection of nearly 20,000 electronic book titles (Ebrary) which can be read in full-text online.

Despite the increasing importance of electronic resources, the libraries have experienced an increase in the circulation of print and media materials. Total library circulation grew from 9,790 in FY-2005 to 17,595 in FY-2009. In 2009 alone, overall circulation of library materials increased by 21%. At the same time, usage of all databases also increased (2009 Annual Report Summary). These increases in use may reflect, at least in part, resource allocation on the part of NECC's administration in support of library collections, information resources, and technology.

The library budget has remained stable during this period with modest but steady increases in funding. Between FY-2005 and FY-2009, materials expenditures grew from $105,600 to $114,600. Operating expenses, excluding salaries, grew from $152,602 to $178,655 during the same period (Library Annual Reports). Despite the concurrent increase in the number of students and cost of materials, this investment has allowed the libraries to increase access to print and electronic resources significantly.

The quality of service provided by the library staff was judged to be one of the libraries' greatest strengths according to the LibQual Survey of students, faculty, and staff conducted in 2007. In 2005, evening and Saturday staff was increased with the addition of a library assistant to back up the Reference Librarian on duty at the Bentley Library, freeing the librarian to offer information literacy sessions, and providing needed circulation assistance. Other staffing improvements include the addition of a part-time Reference Librarian to allow the Lawrence campus library to remain open on two additional evenings a week and on Saturday mornings. A part-time circulation assistant was added in 2004 to help cover the busy morning hours of operation at the Haverhill Campus. Finally, the Cataloger position was increased from part- to full-time in 2008.

Information Literacy is an important part of the libraries' mission and vision, and has recently been approved as one of the college's new Core Academic Skills . Library instruction sessions are one effective way of increasing student exposure to information literacy. Faculty are encouraged to bring classes into the library or to invite instruction librarians into the classroom. Yearly demand for library instruction sessions has risen steadily, with a 36% increase since FY-2006. More than one third of the sessions presented in 2009 were for English composition classes Library Annual Reports. However, in both 2008 and 2009 there was an expansion of the program into

other areas, especially business and science. The instruction librarians have worked to tailor classes for the various subject areas in order to ensure that students are exposed to information literacy topics relevant to their field of study. In 2009, the librarians began posting LibGuides on the library website. These web based guides are designed to steer students toward appropriate sources specific to a course or subject area and are accessible to students on campus or off campus via the internet.

Methods of evaluating student success in acquiring proficiency in information literacy while at the college are still under development, as part of the college wide Assessment of Core Academic Skills initiative. The efficacy of individual bibliographic information sessions is evaluated through exercises at the end of class and through the administration of "minute papers" in random classes. Annually, the libraries promote awareness of information literacy on both campuses by conducting a contest for the best use of information in a research paper.

The physical space devoted to instruction has presented problems on each campus. The Lawrence campus library has no dedicated space for information literacy instruction. If sessions are conducted in the library proper, they take over space at the expense of other students; if sessions are conducted at an off-site location, they are especially problematic because of the limited staffing in Lawrence. The library itself is small, and its location in the basement of the building limits accessibility and exposure. The library also suffers from a lack of differentiated quiet and group study areas. These issues were prominent in both the LibQual Survey of 2007 and the Process Management (PM) project on Library Visioning of 2005.

The Bentley Library has undergone a renovation which includes an improved library instruction classroom. The new room is somewhat larger and offers twenty-two computer work stations, double the number in the older Electronic Research Area (ERA.) The space accommodates larger classes more comfortably. The original ERA has been repurposed for general student use. The total number of available computers for student use in the library will increase from 35 to 52, improving ease of access for students, who are currently sometimes confronted by a waiting line for an available computer.

The Library Visioning PM project of 2005 highlighted the wants and needs of students, faculty and staff in relation to library space. The current renovation project at the Bentley responds to many of the needs expressed in that survey. More group and quiet study spaces, reading and relaxing spaces, greater access to computers, and improved security are all part of the project, as is an art gallery/meeting room. Wireless computer access is available in the library in accordance with IT's policies. One of the top two wants or needs expressed by students in the survey, but not yet included in the renovation, was for a coffee/snack bar area in the library.

The NECC libraries play a vital role in the cultural life of the college through sponsorship of and participation in projects that reflect the intellectual and cultural diversity of the college's students, faculty, and staff. Events sponsored during the past year included student and community art exhibits, environmental awareness month activities, author presentations, and a reception for NECC's faculty and staff authors and writers. (Exhibit Hard copy Events Notebook)

The college ensures appropriate use of its technologies and resources. Policies addressing the use of resources other than computers and wireless networks (i.e. books, movies, and print journals) are listed on the NECC Library website, as are policies for computer and cell phone use. In order to discourage inappropriate use of the library computers, software has been installed on the computers

to prevent the downloading and installation of unauthorized files and/or images. However, the library computers do not contain content filters in order to minimize interference with research activities. Technology systems within both the library and CIT are primarily monitored by observations by the staff and users of these systems (i.e. faculty, students, etc.) for improper use. If improper use is observed, it is brought to the attention of appropriate staff members who then deal with the problem as deemed appropriate.

INSTRUCTIONAL AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The growth of distance education and the establishment of NECC's first online academic programs have led the college to expand and improve our support services for faculty and students in the online environment. CIT provides assistance to NECC faculty as they transition from traditional to online instruction. The CIT staff provides individual and group coaching and is well qualified to provide both technical and pedagogical assistance to instructors in the online environment. In addition, CIT continually updates its workshops and iTEACH program as faculty needs and technology evolve. CIT has modified its training offerings significantly over the past several years as a result of feedback provided by faculty via online surveys. Importantly, CIT also expanded its services to the Lawrence Campus in fall 2009 to meet the growing need for faculty support in online programs in health and other areas based on this site.

While online course completion rates have consistently lagged behind those of traditionally delivered courses, the college is working to address the discrepancy. A college process management project on Student Success in Online Learning completed in 2007, examined possible factors that led to this discrepancy in rates. Results indicated poor student self-selection and poor pre-registration advising were key causes. In response, CIT and the Academic Advising Office collaborated to create the Provide Support advising tool. An Online Readiness Survey is available on the Distance Learning web page to help prospective students determine whether distance education is right for them. To further support student success in the online environment, CIT is currently building a virtual library of brief video tutorials to be made available on Blackboard tools.

Changes in the use of information technology have improved administration, planning and evaluation within the college. A Time and Attendance Project resulted in the creation and implementation of an automated attendance recording system for employees via the web. Following a Document Management Project, document imaging software and equipment was purchased and several college offices began moving from an entirely paper-based system to an electronic filing system. The purpose of these efforts is the eventual reduction of paper use, better utilization of space and staff time, easier retrieval of information, and improved security of individual data.

In 2005 the Office of Institutional Research and Planning (IRP), began posting a wide range of data used in program planning, administration and evaluation, including specific college strategic initiatives and plans on its Institutional Research and Planning Website. By making this information accessible to the public IRP is working to create a culture of inquiry at the college, where faculty and staff continuously seek to improve upon student success.

Institutional Effectiveness

The Library regularly engages in short-and long-term planning activities involving the evaluation of the adequacy, utilization, and impact of library and information resources and services. Specific

examples include the Library's 2008-2012 Long Range Plan, the Library Visioning Process Management Project of 2005, and the LibQual Survey of 2007. These and other planning and assessment activities have led directly to improvements such as increased budgets for database and circulation holdings, expanded hours of service, and renovation to the Haverhill Library facility.

Projections

- By 2011-2012, we will develop a plan to provide suitable space for library instruction on the Lawrence campus.
- As part of the college wide effort to determine how to assess our new core academic skills, library staff will assist other staff and faculty across the college with the creation of tools and systems for assessing how effectively we provide students with Information Literacy knowledge and skills.
- Library staff on both campuses will be trained to manage the rapidly increasing number of electronic resources and related technologies.
- The Bentley Library will implement renovation plans for an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant circulation desk, an expanded library instruction room, and increased informal gathering and collaborative learning spaces for students, faculty and staff, addressing many of the issues raised in the LibQual and PM surveys.

STANDARD 8: PHYSICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Strengths	Challenges
The college is on a clear path to being current in information technology	As the IT work increases, staff levels need to keep pace
All classrooms will be converted to smart classrooms	Faculty and staff need training to use the expanded IT capacity effectively
We have improved—and will continue to improve—energy efficiency	As we renovate, we need to find a way to do so with minimal interruptions of classes

Description

Northern Essex Community College has two campuses and a satellite location. The campus in Haverhill consists of eight buildings located on 106 acres adjacent to I-495. Seven of the eight buildings were constructed in the early 1970s; the newest building on campus is the Technology Center which opened in 2005. The Lawrence campus consists of two buildings, one owned and another leased, in downtown Lawrence. The owned building was built in 1982 and renovated for college use in 1991. The satellite location is a leased facility in North Andover used primarily for workforce development and non-credit instruction; the lease for this facility expires in August 2010 and will not be renewed.

The college has a significant shortage of classroom and lab capacity in Lawrence. Enrollment growth and demand for nursing and allied health programs has strained current facilities. In 2008, the Massachusetts legislature passed a bond bill that includes funds for a new Allied Health and Technology Center. This new building will be located in Lawrence, approximately one block from the existing main campus building. The program design study—the size, cost, and programs to be located in the new building—was completed in 2009. Site preparation is underway, with construction likely to begin in Spring 2011. This facility will allow popular allied health programs to expand and also provide needed space for other programs and support services at the Lawrence campus.

At the Haverhill campus there are a total of 1,859 parking spaces, and at present this number is sufficient. At the NECC Lawrence sites, there are 222 spaces and although capacity issues exist, students may park in a neighboring public lot and parking garage for free.

The college provides free shuttle service between the Lawrence and Haverhill campuses from 7am-2pm, in addition to public bus transportation provided by the regional transportation authority. In addition, NECC campuses are on the regularly scheduled Merrimack Valley Regional Transportation Authority bus route.

The college has used the Banner ERP system since 2000. This system provides comprehensive processing and reporting for all areas of the college, including enrollment management, accounting and finance and facilities management. Over the past two years, the college has moved to leverage its investment in Banner by identifying and implementing the full range of functionality available in the system and integrate best practices used at other institutions.

Appraisal

The physical infrastructure supports the mission of NECC and is well maintained and attractive. Over the past ten years, the facilities that comprise the Haverhill and Lawrence campuses have been thoroughly reviewed, beginning with the Eva Klein Conditions Assessment (2001), the Rickes Utilization Study (2005), and the Sasaki-NECC Campus Master Plan (2007). (Exhibit CD Campus Master Plan) These studies were undertaken in partnership with the Division of Capital Asset Management (DCAM), and the Department of Higher Education (DHE) and provide a solid foundation for multi-year planning, resource allocation, and advocacy for additional capital funding. Consistent with most other public colleges in the state, the college has an extensive list of deferred maintenance needs.

Physical resource planning is closely linked to academic and student services. In the last four years, the college has made great strides toward modernizing classrooms, labs, and other student spaces. As of spring 2010, all classrooms in Haverhill and Lawrence have smart technology, including a computer, projector beam, document camera, and audio equipment. Upgrades to older smart classrooms, so that all rooms are standardized, will progress as resources allow. Two science labs were completely renovated and retrofitted with current equipment to support expanded science programs. Renovation of the Bentley Library began in 2009 and will be completed during 2010. Improvements include a redesign of the first floor, converting over 500 square feet into instructional space and creating a more open floor plan. It has expanded computer lab instructional space and offers additional collaborative learning spaces more consistent with the current "learning commons" paradigm. In 2009 the college also renovated the former Top Notch Theater (now the Chester H. Hawrylciw Theater), improving seating and adding modern lighting and communications equipment. The Student Center is now the Sport & Fitness Center. In 2005, the Behrakis One Stop Center was renovated, incorporating a one-stop center for student services and expanded student advising facilities.

NECC's capital master plan includes a major renovation of the Spurk classroom building on the Haverhill campus. Due to limited capital funding available from the state, this project will probably be done using local funds in a multi-phase, multi-year approach. During FY-2010, for example, the college has improved its energy and learning environment in three areas: new acoustical ceilings, new energy efficient lighting fixtures, and high efficiency air conditioners. This has produced significant savings on future energy costs. Future projects include replacing mechanical systems, for example, the inefficient heating system; and exploring the renovation of an underutilized lecture hall into a performing arts space.

The college is required by the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education to invest no less than 5% of revenue in capital

adaptation and renewal projects; NECC has met this target for nine of the past ten years.

Changes in the use of information technology have improved administration, planning and evaluation within the college. A Time and Attendance Project resulted in the creation and implementation of an automated attendance recording system for employees via the web. Following a Document Management Project, document imaging software and equipment was purchased and several college offices began moving from an entirely paper-based system to an electronic filing system. The purpose of these efforts is the eventual reduction of paper use, better utilization space and staff time, easier retrieval of information, and improved security of individual data.

In 2005 the Office of Institutional Research and Planning (IRP), began posting a wide range of data used in program planning, and evaluation, including specific college strategic initiatives and plans on its Institutional Research and Planning Website. By making this information accessible to the public IRP is working to create a culture of inquiry at the college, where faculty and staff continuously seek to improve upon student success.

The college is developing a central IT Plan which would include addressing all purchasing, maintaining, and replacing of computer hardware and software on campus. So far, NECC has used this centralized system only for its computer labs and smart classrooms. Other areas have been expected to monitor the capabilities of their equipment and budget accordingly when they need to refresh equipment, with some assistance from Information Technology Services (ITS) on these determinations. In the past, this process created extra steps and led to some inequalities across the campuses.

The college is in the process of centralizing all computer equipment management with IT allowing for a more accurate and timely plan for refreshing equipment across the college. This plan has been brought to the cabinet for funding from capital expenditure and other sources such as the 2009 ARRA funds. Eventually, this plan will be part of multi-year budget plans.

A robust online environment, including comprehensive web access and instructional technology, are important to our students and faculty. Over the past two years, the college has made several investments into expanding this environment, including a new data center, expanded server capacity, and backup generator.

The college recently made a significant investment in IT resources available to students in campus computer labs. As of fall 2009, PCs in all labs were replaced with current technology.

In 2009, the Information Technology Committee (ITC) was formed, with 19 members representing a cross section of the college. The ITC ensures proper and adequate equipment is provided to faculty, staff, and students, and also serves as a communication conduit for technology related strategic goals, policies, and plans.

In order to ensure full compliance with Payment Card Industry (PCI) standards and provide adequate privacy, the college works diligently to ensure security of its data collecting and sharing systems in these sensitive areas. NECC continues to engineer new and maintain its existing applications to comply with all federal, state, and local ordinances, as well as PCI standards. A full description of our electronic security policies and procedures is available on our website. The college also makes use of annual security audits and works with appropriate vendors to ensure policies and procedures are reviewed and compliant.

The college is working on creating a more effective system of training faculty and staff on the use of Banner applications.

Security of our physical resources is periodically reviewed. Recent

improvements as a result of these reviews include an enhanced security system consisting of additional parking lot lighting, siren poles across campus, and phones in all public hallways. Security personnel are on duty around the clock on the Haverhill campus. In Lawrence, security personnel are on-site during campus open hours and a remote surveillance system installed three years ago is monitored from Haverhill during off hours.

Institutional Effectiveness

The college regularly evaluates its physical and technological resources in light of its mission, current needs, and plans for the future, and resources are allocated based on these evaluations. The Campus Master Plan and recommendations from the Academic Facilities Committee have led to recent renovations and planned construction of an Allied Health and Technology Center on the Lawrence campus. Process Management projects have led to new document imaging and storage systems and electronic processes for various human resources and finance functions. In Information Technology Services, a renewed focus on broad engagement in planning have led to the creation of a college wide Information Technology Committee that has already informed the recent expansion of smart classrooms and the development of a college wide computer replacement cycle.

Projection

- The college will develop a ten-year prioritized list of capital projects and associated financing options including renovation of the Spurk building.
- The college will develop a multi-year prioritized list of IT projects, including non-credit online registration, online academic advising and assessment system to support student success and the goals of Achieving the Dream.
- By the fall of 2010, we will lease new, more cost-efficient space for Workforce Development and Community Education; combining these programs and services with Adult Basic Education and selected credit programs.

STANDARD 9: FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Strengths	Challenges
Transparency and inclusiveness of the budget process	Reduced State support
ARRA funds used for long-term cost savings, reflecting commitment to fiscal investment	Maintenance costs (facilities, instructional equipment, IT) will be built into budget
Realistic picture of fiscal challenges ahead and already engaged in responsive planning	Contingency planning

Description

FINANCIAL RESOURCES ARE STABLE AND SUPPORT COLLEGE MISSION

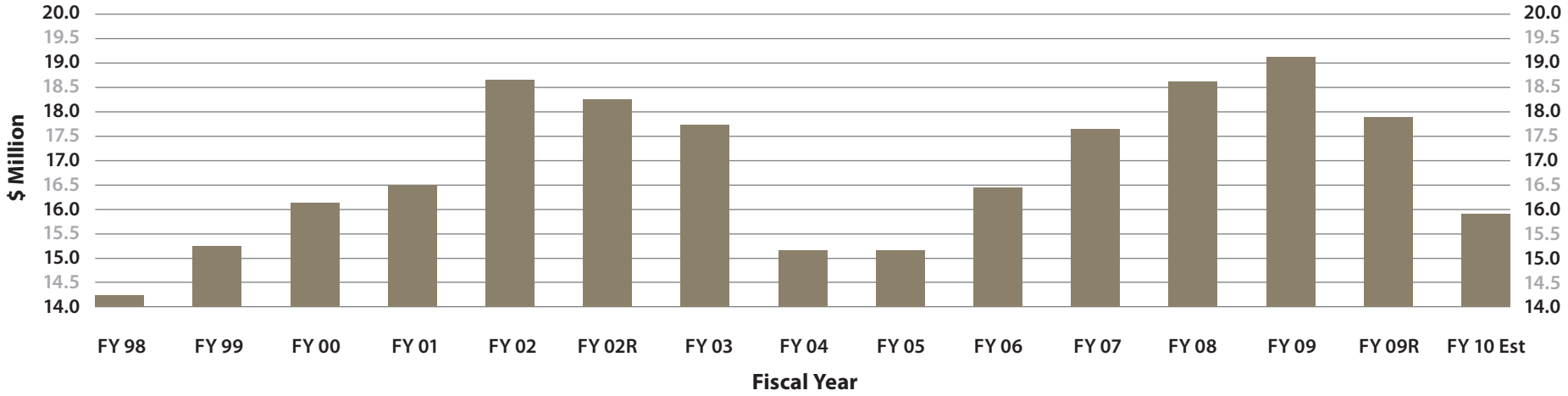
The college has ensured that its finances have remained sufficiently stable to support its mission, despite significant fluctuations in state support and other funding sources over the last ten plus years.

The college receives funds from a variety of sources, including an annual state appropriation, student charges, grants, contracts and commissions.

In FY-2009, total revenue was $54,467,963; 34% from state support, 31% from student charges, 24% from federal, state, and private grants, and 11% from other sources.

Consistent with all Massachusetts Community Colleges, tuition from day courses is returned to the state. Tuition from Division of Continuing Education (DCE) courses and all fees are retained by the college. Day course tuition, set by the Board of Higher Education, is currently $25/credit; local fees, set by the NECC Board of Trustees, average $117 per credit. Total student charges at NECC are lower than most other MA public colleges. A full time student will pay $3,870 per year in tuition and fees. Approximately 55% of NECC students receive financial aid to assist with these costs.

Exhibit 4: State Support to NECC



Financial support for higher education in Massachusetts has varied considerably over the past ten years, as with most states across the country. Large changes in state support from year to year have stressed annual budgets and hampered longer-term planning efforts.

The Office of Institutional Advancement is the foundation of our fundraising efforts. The Vice President of Institutional Advancement works with her staff and the president to regularly solicit contributions from external and internal constituencies to support diverse purposes (scholarships, planned gifts, program support, and unrestricted funds) that fulfill the college mission. Institutional Advancement staff work in conjunction with other areas of the college to write grant proposals to public and private funders, a pursuit essential to supporting college endeavors.

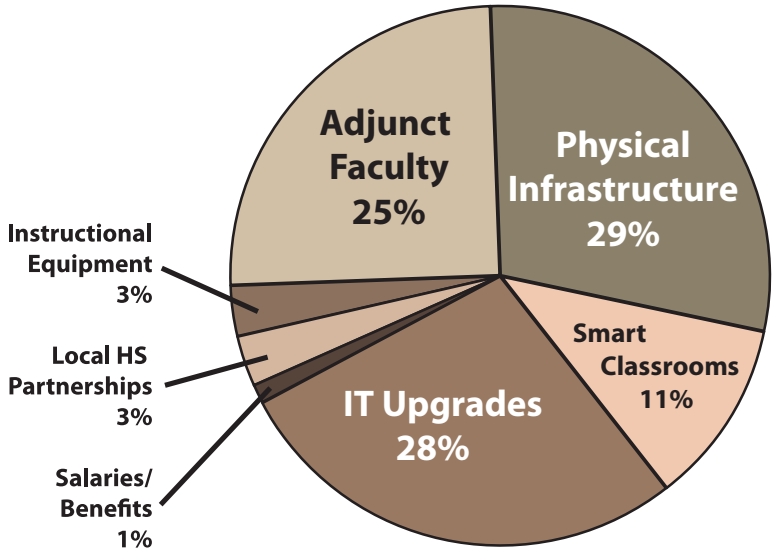
The NECC Foundation was formed in 1972 for the purpose of raising private funds in support of the college. This includes capital campaigns, support for faculty initiatives, and other special projects. The Foundation and the Office of Institutional Advancement have raised $15,190,605 over the past four years. (Exhibit 09-01).

In addition, individual areas of the college seek and invite other potential sources of funding to establish or sustain college activities. For example, local businesses work either with Work Force Development and Community Education to establish and offer non-credit contract courses and programs or with Academic Affairs on contracts for credit courses and programs. These areas monitor potential partnerships, keep related areas informed, and are key participants in procuring and using these revenues to meet their needs as state support diminishes.

Historically, state funds have also been available for critical deferred maintenance projects. In FY-2008, the college received $500,000. For the past two years, no state maintenance funds have been available and the college expects limited funding in future years.

Fortunately, through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), the college received $4.2 million for FY-2010. The cabinet prioritized a list of projects that are considered strategic investments and that will save money in the long run.

EXHIBIT 5: ARRA Projects



This one time funding will be instrumental in upgrading information technology infrastructure, enhancing the learning experience for students, and improving buildings and grounds. (Exhibit Hard Copy 9-03 Federal Stimulus).

Over the past several years, the college has shown significant growth in its financial resources. Total net assets have almost doubled since FY-2005, increasing from $10.4 million to $18.5 million and capital assets have increased over 50%, from $27.0 million to $41.2 million over the same period. The college is currently debt free, but local funding of capital and larger value projects has placed significant pressure on available reserves. The college plans to grow unrestricted reserves which are below the levels of its peers and recommended levels.

The college employs several measures to assure that financial resources support our mission. First, our strategic plan drives budget priorities through an annual goal setting process. The president also utilizes an inclusive budget process, so that faculty, staff, management, and students have opportunities for input in budget planning. In addition, the All-College Assembly Finance Committee, an advisory body with an elected membership from various college constituencies, has an interactive role in many phases of internal budget development, as described below.

Budget Process and Planning

The planning and budget process assures that financial resources support the mission of the college. The annual budget process begins with House 1/2, the Governor's budget. With this, Financial Planning & Analysis prepares initial revenue and expense projections for the coming fiscal year.

Between January and May, cabinet members develop their goals and budgets for the following fiscal year, based on the initial college spending plan. During this time, the Finance Committee invites cabinet members to attend a meeting to discuss plans for their areas, and any questions the committee might have, and then presents

spending plan recommendations to the president in April.

The president then presents the finalized spending plan and any fee change recommendations to the board of trustees' Audit and Finance Committee and to the full board in early June for approval. (Exhibit 09-2-BudgetGuidance).

Internally, through the fiscal year, Accounting and Finance (part of the Administration and Finance Division) processes financial transactions, and ensures funds are expended in accordance with the approved budget and applicable state and college policies. All department heads and support staff have real time, online access to financial transactions and budget vs. actual results reporting. In addition, Financial Planning & Analysis prepares quarterly revenue and expenditures reports for the Board of Trustees and Audit & Finance Committee.

Before embarking on any substantial change at the college (programmatic, facility, etc.), our practice is to confirm the financial capacity to move forward. For example, when NECC decided to offer entire degree programs online, the college first projected potential needs and ensured that there were enough resources to support the necessary software, faculty development, and student support services. (Exhibit Hard Copy 9-3 2007 NEASC online report 05).

The college has traditionally not prepared multi-year revenue projections or operating budgets for most divisions. During FY-2010, Information Technology and Facilities and Grounds have put the structure in place to do this going forward.

Accountability

Many internal and external mechanisms promote ethical oversight of college financial policies. Fiscal policies are in writing and some are published on the college website. The policies are maintained by Accounting and Finance, reviewed regularly and consistently implemented to comply with ethical and sound finance practices.

The Office of Institutional Advancement adheres to college fiscal policies, including a Solicitation Policy (Exhibit 09-04 NECC Solicitation Policy) stipulating the conditions and terms for gift solicitation, advancement, fundraising, and resource development efforts.

The Board of Trustees retains oversight of budget and financial matters, maintains autonomy on spending and student fees, and approves all grants. The board's Audit and Finance Committee, its only standing committee, ensures that the college operates within its means. This financial oversight is viewed as a key responsibility of the board.

Massachusetts General Laws require annual external audits to review college financial statements, internal control structure, and policies. The Board of Trustees review the financial statements and the management letter, and then take appropriate action on resulting recommendations or conclusions. The college has received unqualified opinions in all external audits, affirming sound financial reporting and practices.

Financial aid policies and procedures have been developed to support college goals and mission. A new policy and procedures manual, which is reviewed annually and before implementing a new law or regulation, provides financial aid and other college employees with a tool to serve students in the most efficient way. The launch of Financial Aid Self-Service capability has improved student access to financial aid, consequently improving access to enrolling at the college. In fall 2009, 56% of NECC students received some form of financial aid, compared to 53% of the students in the fall 2008.

A variety of other external reporting mechanisms further contribute to ethical oversight. The college reports monthly to the state comptroller, which also receives the colleges audited financial

statement. In addition, the college reports to the state auditor, filing an annual survey to identify risk factors, which may serve as a basis for a decision to audit. Also as part of the annual external audit, comprehensive disclosures must be filed. The Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE) also publishes data from all community colleges on finance related Performance Measures.

Appraisal

FINANCIAL RESOURCES ARE STABLE AND SUPPORT COLLEGE MISSION

The college is financially strong and well equipped to maintain its commitment to educational quality, even as it faces future fiscal uncertainty. A key component of this stability is the keen awareness that state support is down as state revenue continues to be significantly under projection, driven by general economic conditions. The college understands that even if this revenue rises, there are significant demands to support other state priorities such as universal health care, health and human services, state debt, and mandated funding for early education and care.

Financial Aid policies and practices facilitate students' independence in the Financial Aid process and support access to enrolling at the college. Despite a fee increase for FY-2009, the college is still competitive with peers in affordability and maintains its commitment to keeping costs low for students. The 13% fee increase was unprecedented, yet needed, in the wake of severe funding cuts. Additional changes to other student fees (raising the graduation fee from $40 to $50, for example) will also generate more new revenue. It is anticipated that fee increases for FY-2010 will generate $1.8 million dollars of revenue.

There is a college-wide commitment to research and procure new funding sources. The Office for Institutional Advancement is a key asset in terms of generating college revenues. Several areas of the college employ an entrepreneurial approach to seeking out grants and other funding opportunities.

There is awareness that local funding for capital expenses is a growing need, essential to supporting college activities. For example, the college must maintain an infrastructure that supports the expansion of online courses and the college website. As state funding for capital expenses has dwindled, the college has found money for isolated projects (such as NECC Foundation and ARRA funds). The use of ARRA funds was well planned and prioritized. The ARRA projects constitute investments in the college that will provide long term savings and equip the college to weather future financial variability.

In response to fiscal variability, the college has actively engaged in developing cost savings measures and devising creative ways to offer programs and services more cost efficiently. The president sits on the Department of Higher Education (DHE) Commission on Collaboration and Efficiencies, which is charged with determining system-wide collaborative cost-saving strategies for the future, including evaluating and strengthening cost efficiency for online learning. It is anticipated that future collaborations with other Massachusetts public higher education institutions will provide some cost-saving measures.

Low unrestricted reserves will limit financial flexibility over the planning horizon. This will be somewhat offset by the benefit of having no long-term debt obligations . Building the reserves to the recommended level must be viewed as a long-term (ten year) goal, due to a newer paradigm of consistently lower state support, reduced state funding for deferred maintenance and capital projects,

and adjustments in program offerings and staffing levels. Enhanced budget monitoring and reporting will be employed to ensure expenditures stay within projected revenues.

College financial resources are directed to support our mission and meet our fundamental needs. All levels of leadership are entrusted to ensure sufficient financial resources will continue to serve our student population and our educational objectives. Funding is appropriately spent to support college activities in the short term. In addition, we now view spending as an investment toward accomplishing our long term goals, as demonstrated by the financial prioritizing of hiring faculty, sustaining dual enrollment, supporting IT infrastructure, offering hybrid courses and updating facilities.

The college will expand the Lawrence campus with additional leased space, beginning in August 2010. Workforce Development, expanded business programs, and adult basic education programs will be co-located in this new space. In addition, progress continues in realizing the new Allied Health & Technology Center. Both facilities will provide much needed additional classroom capacity, and greater visibility and access in the greater Lawrence area.

Many fiscal safeguards, such as the inclusive budget process and financial planning, and use of annual strategic plan goals to set budget priorities, ensure that spending supports the college mission. Despite the loss of state support, these practices will help sustain this commitment.

BUDGET PROCESS AND PLANNING

The commitment to a transparent, participatory budget process, including financial reporting and planning, is a key strength, evident in individual areas of the college.

The FY-2010 budget planning process, which had to address a considerable decrease to the FY-2010 state appropriation, exemplified this candor. The president, acknowledging that difficult decisions would have to be made to offset these cuts, held a series of open forums for all staff to give input into budget priorities. A budget blog was set up, containing memos and other relevant information, and providing an opportunity for members of the college community to offer opinions or ideas (anonymously if desired). The president kept the college community informed and involved through regular communications.

The Finance Committee is further evidence of the participatory nature of the budget process, providing another mechanism for college wide input in budget development. The Vice President of Administration and Finance is a resource to the committee but has no vote in committee decisions. In addition, the Vice President of Academic Affairs annually updates all faculty on the budget process and its role within the context of institutional planning.

A challenge to financial planning is the variability of state and other funding sources. It is difficult to develop budgets, especially for the long term, with so much fluctuation. This presents the additional challenge of working with assumptions about how much state support will be available and whether enrollments will increase or decrease. However, administration and finance staff is committed to making realistic assumptions about future revenue sources. They will also promote diversification of funding sources and moderate spending to ease the impact of funding variability.

Deficiency in long term financial planning has been a fiscal weakness, but the college is already addressing this with a move to multi-year planning. Utilizing a multi-year budget planning process may necessitate that we change our no debt philosophy in order to address more effectively needs that will exceed our anticipated

financial resources. Notable this year is the approval of the local budget before the start of the fiscal year. This pre-approval is part of the college's commitment to be more efficient with planning for the future.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Numerous internal and external controls help ensure financial integrity. Fiscal policies are developed, revised and reviewed regularly. The college is committed to complying with all applicable policies, laws and regulations. The Vice President of Administration and Finance has set a goal to make all financial data easily accessible and understandable for all users. With the recent implementation of Banner Self-Service Finance, budget reports are presented in a more user-friendly format, allowing individual departments to more easily assess their financial position. Furthermore, administration and finance staff offer trainings on fiscal procedures and provide a website containing policies, forms and other resources. They have also developed a monthly newsletter which is sent to key personnel and provides staff, policy, and procedural updates.

Recent changes in the Administration and Finance Division, especially new positions and staff, are initiating a positive fiscal cultural shift at the college. Under the leadership of a new vice president, the Accounting and Finance Department has made strides in updating fiscal policies, resulting in improved budget processes. The division sustains our commitment to a participatory budget process, including promoting budget ownership in each department.

The college retains a strong commitment to an annual external audit and has quickly corrected any deficiencies noted by such. The role of the board of trustees, particularly its Audit and Finance Committee, is commendable. They serve as an extra checkpoint to ensure the budget represents and furthers institutional educational priorities. They represent the voice of the community, reflecting the diversity of our constituents and programmatic needs, in our financial planning.

Institutional Effectiveness

The college pays careful attention to institutional effectiveness of financial resources, and as described above, has in place appropriate internal and external mechanisms to evaluate its fiscal condition and financial management, and to maintain its integrity. Examples of recent improvements resulting from these activities include aligning the budget approval process with the fiscal year, updated fiscal policies and financial aid processes, and increased attention to long-term physical and financial needs of the college, such as deferred maintenance and reserves.

Projection

- The college will rely more on local revenue in the wake of decreasing state support by aggressively seeking diverse funding sources and implementing cost savings measures.
- The college will strengthen fiscal contingency planning to meet long-term needs and build reserve balances.

STANDARD 10: PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

Strengths	Challenges
Strong commitment to public disclosure	Allocate appropriate resources to improve and maintain the college's web site
Skilled, enthusiastic, and professional communications staff	Decentralize web editing and maintenance
Highly visible and well-known educational resource in the community	

Description

The college employs various forms of media to disclose information about itself to the public. An active marketing operation strives to communicate to prospective students, current students, and to the public at large that Northern Essex Community College offers a high quality education and a robust student experience. In line with the college's mission statement, the information presented to the public highlights our affordable adult education opportunities, student support services, flexible scheduling, and more than 70 programs of study. Through public disclosure efforts, the college also presents itself as a resource for enhancing the social, cultural and economic life of the Greater Merrimack Valley region. In addition, the public disclosure efforts, at the college also must meet the needs of communication dissemination outside the realm of marketing and promotion. As a public institution, the college is obliged to foster a culture of openness. To meet this goal, the college has an active and responsive atmosphere for two-way communication with the public and the press.

The college website is a vital resource for disclosing information about the resources and programs we provide for residents of the Greater Merrimack Valley. The college also uses direct mailing, including the *Annual Report, Discover NECC* and *Non-Credit Schedules,* and informational brochures on the college's many programs (Exhibit 10-4 Discover NECC.pdf; Exhibit 10-5 Annual Report 09.pdf; Exhibit 10-6 Academic Handbook.pdf). The college purchased advertising space in various local media, particularly newspapers and cable television, to distribute information about the college's events and academic programs. Our award-winning student newspaper on campus serves as an active and independent source of news and information for the students, employees, and the wider

college community. Digital communication technology is used for e-mail campaigns and Facebook networking. In addition, the college continues to provide live, face-to-face presentations to local high schools to inform the public about the college and its offerings All in all, the college strives to remain current in the ways we disseminate information by utilizing the ever-evolving methods of communication available in today's technology-driven climate. (Exhibit 10-3 E-mail Interviews.pdf).

ADMISSIONS, COURSE OFFERINGS AND STUDENT INFORMATION

As of October 2009, the college moved exclusively to an online academic catalog. The major advantage to making this information available via the NECC website is that it allows the college to update critical content on an "as needed" basis. The end result is that current students, prospective students, and the public at large have immediate access to the most accurate and current information available. Courses, schedules and program descriptions and requirements are all found on the college website, as well as information on how to contact the college, how to become a student, the cost of attendance, and how to apply for financial aid.

There is information on student services, specialized learning opportunities, extracurricular activities, policies and procedures, expected educational outcomes, student successes, and transferability of credits. The college website also provides information on our mission, goals, strategic directions, the board of trustees, locations of campuses, characteristics of the student body, and accreditation. Publications are also posted on the site, including the NECC Annual Report which includes a summary of the recently audited financial statement. Information about NECC's accredited status is accurately and explicitly worded on the site as well.

When students apply to the college, they receive information on admission procedures, cost of attendance, financial aid information, and programs of study. Additionally, they receive publications highlighting student services and resources and student life. Upon registering, they also receive the Student Code of Conduct. Students can use the Academic Advising Handbook to find information, or they can ask questions using the web advising option available on the college website. Orientation Leaders contact students by e-mail or phone, inviting them to participate in various activities offered at the college. Packets of important printed materials about student life are distributed as packets in the Student Success Seminar, as well as at other orientations to make students aware of what the college has to offer in terms of extracurricular activities.

NECC COMMITMENT TO CURRENCY AND CONSISTENCY

In an effort to ensure that print and electronic information about the college is available, accurate, current and complete, the Marketing Communications department works in conjunction with other institutional areas and departments, including faculty, staff and administration, to review print and electronic publications. Content is either created by Marketing Communications and edited/reviewed by other departments, or created by other departments and edited/reviewed by Marketing Communications. By developing a comprehensive editing and review process, the Marketing Communications team attempts to continually ensure that information being presented to the public is as current, consistent, and accurate as possible (Exhibit Hard Copy 10-1 Review Process for Marketing Communications.pdf.).

One of our most important data collections the college maintains regarding rates of student success is Key Performance Indicators. These five data points, developed by the college's Institutional

Effectiveness Task Force, tell the college about our students' progress through developmental courses and "gateway courses," their fall-to-fall retention, their completion of degrees and certificates, and other critical information.

The data is disseminated across the college community at appropriate meetings, through internal communication channels, and via the college website. This helps anyone who may be interested stay informed as to how well the institution is performing. To measure the success of students achieving the goals of the initiative, topical data reports are also presented on the Achieving the Dream website. Recent reports include "Progress of Students Who Tested Into Introduction to Basic Algebra II" and "The Effect of Gender on Course Completion Rates for Developmental and Gatekeeper Course." These reports are designed to focus on the institution's strengths while highlighting areas where resources should be directed to encourage improvement.

In support of our mission, the Office for Institutional Research & Planning publishes a variety of information regarding rates of retention, graduation rates, grade matrixes, as well as performance measurement reports, program assessment summaries, the Community College Survey of Student Engagement, and data comparisons to other institutions through published IPEDS data. The Office of Academic Program Review and Assessment develops and publishes program assessment summaries. Since the prior NEASC report, the college has implemented a college-wide Outcomes Assessment program. All of the college's academic programs were/are scheduled to complete a comprehensive program review, after which program outcomes must be assessed. The rotation for program review began in 2005, so several programs have been assessing outcomes for a few years. The Director of Academic Program Review and Assessment publishes the results of outcomes assessment.

AVAILABILITY OF REQUESTS FOR PUBLICATIONS AND OTHER INFORMATION

The college responds to public inquiries primarily via the Public Relations office, which routes the inquiries to the individual or to the department best suited to address the inquiry in question. Inquiries from the press are routed to the Public Relations office, and inquiries from potential and current students are routed to enrollment services. E-mail and the website are used by the college's public relations operation to suggest stories to the press and to post press releases.

Appraisal

WEBSITE

During the last few years, and certainly since the last accreditation, the college website has become the primary vehicle for public disclosure. The college maintains an active and capable publications and advertising department, but the Assistant Vice President of Marketing Communications recognizes that the college website has become the most important vehicle for disseminating information to the public (Exhibit 10-8 Ron Taber Interviews.pdf). Allocating sufficient staff and financial resources to keep up with growth in this area will continue to be an ongoing challenge (see Exhibit 10-8 Ron Taber Interviews.pdf).

As reliance on the website as a source of critical information has grown in recent years, the need to constantly improve usability and functionality remain vitally important. The current website is workable and comprehensive, but it has been difficult at times to keep information current, and individuals and programs at the college have sought more direct access to and control over content. A re-design

scheduled to launch in the spring of 2010 should vastly improve the user experience The new website will be used as a more effective marketing tool for prospective students, and will also be a more user-friendly resource for the college community. The long term plan is to create essentially two different websites: the public site, which serves primarily prospective students and the community; and the "portal" site, which requires a log-in account and serves current students, faculty, and staff. One of the goals of the redesign is to decentralize the editing process and make updating the website more accessible to broader spectrum of internal constituents, particularly those who oversee programs and departments, so that they may update content themselves. The end result will be a shorter turnaround time for updated and accurate content to be displayed to site visitors.

Though the site re-design will offer a cleaner navigational experience, the current website does an effective job of providing information to students, employees, and the community. Information regarding courses, academic schedules, and registration is regularly updated so it is accurate, timely, and sufficient to allow students and prospective students to make informed decisions about their education. There is clear information on how to contact the college, how to become a student, and how to apply for financial aid. There is useful information on student services, specialized learning opportunities, extracurricular activities, policies and procedures, expected educational outcomes, student successes, and transferability of credits. The site also features a functional online catalog, as well as information on mission, goals, strategic directions, the board of trustees, locations of campuses, characteristics of the student body, and accreditation.

ADVERTISING AND MARKETING

The college is doing a successful job of communicating with students about the institution. According to the 2009 CCSSE results, 73 percent of part-time and full-time students either agreed or strongly agreed they had received accurate and up-to-date information from the college. In this study, NECC fared stronger than its peer institutions, at which only 65 percent of part-time and full-time students either agreed or strongly agreed they had received accurate and up-to-date information from their colleges (Exhibit 10-7 CCSSE 09 Results.pdf.) A 2008 analysis of the effectiveness of marketing and recruitment materials revealed that many students had seen, heard, or read advertisements about the college's programs (Exhibit 10-9 Marketing Study.pdf) . However, the study also revealed that most students (76 percent) had "always known" about the college or first found out about it from an acquaintance rather than advertisements, promotions, or other materials generated by the college. Approximately one-half of survey respondents recalled seeing advertising prior to enrolling at the college, and 72 percent of respondents who recalled the advertising indicated the ads had "at least a minor influence" on their decision to enroll. This data indicates that the public has a strong awareness of college programs and that the institution is adequately informing the public of these programs.

THE PRESS AND INQUIRIES FROM THE PUBLIC

E-mail and the website are used successfully by the college's public relations office to suggest stories to the press and to post press releases. The college also effectively responds to public inquiries primarily via the public relations office, which routes the inquiries to the individual or department best suited to address a particular

question. The college strives to be as responsive as possible in all instances, which is demonstrated through the work of the active public relations staff. This commitment to public disclosure can also be seen in the institution's willingness to respond to inquiries by the student newspaper. For example, during the 2009 spring semester, the editor-in-chief of the student newspaper requested the college's payroll data under the Freedom of Information Act, and this information was supplied promptly. Also, the president of the college and other top administrators make themselves available to meet regularly for interviews with the student press.

PUBLICATIONS

The college publishes lists of current faculty, names and positions of administrative officers, and members of the governing boards in its online college catalog. All information that is contained in key institutional publications such as the Annual Report, NECC Magazine, Discover NECC, recruitment literature, the NECC Application, program brochures, student life brochures, and student services brochures is updated on an annual or semi-annual basis. This helps to ensure the timeliness and accuracy of information pertaining to the characteristics of our student population, student success data, the campus setting, the range of available resources, the scope of experiential opportunities, program expectations, college policies, and critical enrollment information.

Institutional Effectiveness

The College reviews all of its official publications, including those found on the college website, regularly. Most are reviewed annually as they are revised and updated, while others are reviewed on an as-needed basis. As NECC, like most colleges, has focused more of its attention on Web resources as the primary tool for presenting official information, we have concurrently planned for decentralizing more responsibility for updating critical resources, such as course and program descriptions, and admissions and registration resources; and for making updates on a more frequent basis.

Projection

- A re-designed public website will be launched in the spring of 2010. This will vastly improve the user experience for prospects and the general public.
- An internal "portal" website is scheduled to be launched in late 2010. This will vastly improve site functionality for current students, faculty, and staff.
- De-centralized website editing capabilities will be rolled out to college-wide content experts throughout 2010. As more internal departments gain the ability to update and edit content specific to their area of expertise, the end result is a website featuring the most accurate information possible.

STANDARD 11: INTEGRITY

Strengths	Challenges
Academic freedom is respected	Enhance student understanding of the Code of Conduct and academic integrity
Core values are regularly reviewed	Improve implementation and knowledge of grievance procedures
Extensive efforts to build an atmosphere that welcomes diversity	Increase diversity of employees, especially faculty

Description

Northern Essex Community College's (NECC) commitment to integrity is proclaimed in its mission statement, which pledges that the college will serve the people of the Merrimack Valley as a caring institution; and in its core values, which include collaboration, respect, diversity, and access and opportunity. The core values were last reviewed and updated in 2007 as part of the college's highly inclusive strategic planning process.

The college has an array of policies and practices that help to carry out this commitment to integrity and ensure fairness, truthfulness, and equality of treatment in dealings with employees and students and in activities in the community. Like the mission statement and core values, these policies appear on the college's website and in a variety of publications, such as the Academic Catalog , College Statements, Policies & Disclosures, Academic Policies & Procedures and Student Code of Conduct and Student Grievance Procedure.

POLICIES RELATED TO EMPLOYEES AND STUDENTS

The College Statements, Policies & Disclosures, which can be found on the college's website, describes an array of policies and practices related to integrity which are applicable to college employees, students, and visitors. These include prohibitions of hazing and the

possession of alcohol, firearms, and illegal drugs on campus; policies regulating the use of computers, networks, and e-mail; student privacy rights under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974; and the college's compliance with the Crime Awareness and Campus Security Act of 1990, which requires the publication of an annual security report. The annual Summary of Campus Incidents provides statistics on various types of crimes that have occurred on and near the college and is posted on the NECC website.

The collective bargaining agreements for AFSCME employees and MCCC/MTA Full-time and Part-time faculty set procedures for the resolution of grievances for their unit members. Non-Unit Professionals also have a complaint procedure contained in the *Board of Higher Education Community College Non-Unit Professionals Personnel Policies Handbook*.

The Student Code of Conduct and Student Grievance Procedure, which is distributed to all new students when they register for classes, details student rights and responsibilities, regulations governing student conduct, disciplinary offenses and possible sanctions, student rights to due process, and the disciplinary process for Code of Conduct violations. It sets high standards for student behavior, including obeying laws, respecting individuals and property, and maintaining academic integrity. It explains the disciplinary process for students who violate these standards, including the requirement for written charges and a hearing, delineates the potential sanctions from admonition to expulsion, and describes the appeals process for students. This document also explains the Student Grievance Procedure, wherein students may bring a complaint against faculty or other employees of the college for a violation of their rights, including disputes about grades. After careful review, a new version of the Code of Conduct was adopted by all the Massachusetts Community Colleges in 2007-2008. In a recent survey of students, over three quarters were aware the college had a student code of conduct, but only a quarter of those believed they knew what the code said and just over 20% knew students had a right to file a grievance.

LEGAL AUTHORITY/REQUIREMENTS AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

NECC operates as a public institution of higher education in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts pursuant to Mass. General Laws, Chapter 15A, *et seq*. The college is authorized by the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education to award associate degrees and certificates in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 15A, Sections 9 & 22. The college observes all applicable state and federal laws and regulations and, as a public institution of higher education, receives legal guidance and representation through the Massachusetts Community College System's General Counsel's Office and the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office. These offices review new laws and regulations and help the college stay up to date and in compliance.

NECC follows the Policy on Affirmative Action shared by all of the Massachusetts community colleges that seeks, "…an environment where equity and diversity are truly valued…" and affirms the prohibition against discrimination based on "race, creed, religion, color, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, genetic information, maternity leave, and national origin." The college complies with federal and state regulations and collective bargaining agreements in its hiring, evaluation, and promotion policies. Complaints about discrimination or sexual harassment, including those from students, are handled by the human resources office. Fourteen such complaints (five discrimination, nine sexual harassment) have been filed since 2000; five cases were dismissed, one was resolved with an apology, and eight individuals were found guilty of the complaint or at least

of inappropriate behavior, resulting in sanctions of non-reappointment and termination.

Ethnic minorities made up about 28 percent of the student body in fall 2008, compared to 22 percent in the population of cities and towns from which the college draws most of its students. Although the percentage of minority employees (about 14% of full-time employees, 10% of full-time professional employees, and 11.1% of full-time faculty) at the college has climbed substantially since NECC's last self-study, it remains well below that of students and has not increased much since 2004.

Recognizing this, the college has redoubled its efforts to increase the minority representation of our employees. NECC advertises open positions on many job boards, including Diverse Issues in Higher Ed and Latinos in Higher Ed. As described in our revised Faculty Hiring Process (Exhibit 11-4A Faculty Hiring Process.pdf), the director of human resources/affirmative action and the hiring manager review the candidate pool for each position to assure it is diverse enough before proceeding to interviews. If the pool is not diverse enough, a search can be halted and the position Search Committees must include a member that is either part of the Diversity Committee or the NCBI Training Team (see below), and are guided by a Search Committee Handbook that emphasizes equal treatment of all candidates. In addition, members of search committees receive training that addresses diversity considerations and avoiding cognitive errors.

The college also pursues multiple avenues to create a welcoming environment on campus for those of all backgrounds. We are a campus affiliate of the National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI), a non-profit leadership training organization that works to eliminate prejudice and conflict in communities throughout the world. Team members at the college are trained to facilitate workshops on diversity to employees, students, and other constituents. Such workshops reached almost 750 people in the 2008-2009 academic year, including about 600 students.

In addition, the college has a Diversity Committee whose mission is to recognize, support and encourage, "…creative ways for all members of the college community to participate, celebrate, appreciate and learn about each other both in and outside the classroom." The Office for Faculty and Staff Development co-sponsored in spring 2008 the college's genocide theme across the curriculum, which combined guest speakers, theatrical productions, films, and in-class activities aimed at combating indifference and intolerance, and which served 200 faculty, staff, students and community members. The Student Engagement Center also offers a variety of multicultural programs; 649 students in the 2008-2009 academic year took part in events such as Hispanic Heritage Month, Black History Month, Chinese New Year, and a discussion series that examined the cultural traditions of different countries.

The college is in compliance with the requirements of The Americans with Disabilities Act both for new construction and older buildings. An Access Committee meets at least twice a semester to deal with issues of concern related to people with disabilities and providing needed updates for facilities.

OTHER POLICIES RELATED TO INTEGRITY

Individual parts of the college have integrity standards and policies germane to their functions. The integrity of the college's financial reporting, for instance, is ensured by various oversight activities mandated by the federal government, Massachusetts general law, the Office of the State Comptroller, the State Auditor, and the Department of Higher Education (DHE). This includes an annual audit

conducted by an independent, external firm; periodic audits conducted by the State Auditor; and required reporting to the Office of the State Comptroller and DHE (see Standard 9). Similarly, Enrollment Management and Student Services programs are guided by licensure and certification requirements from outside organizations, such as the National Junior College Athletic Association for athletics (see Standard 6).

Appraisal

NECC works hard to publicize both its principles and its policies and practices related to integrity. As described above, an array of documents detailing these policies and practices can be found on our website.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

The college assures the rights of faculty and students to teach, study, and pursue knowledge freely. In a survey of academic department chairs and program coordinators conducted in spring 2009, respondents overwhelmingly indicated that academic freedom was respected at NECC. Moreover, there have been no grievances filed with the local chapter of the Massachusetts Community College Council related to academic freedom in recent years.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

NECC expects students to live up to high standards of academic honesty. Academic ethics and plagiarism are defined in the Student Code of Conduct and Student Grievance Procedure. The college strongly urges faculty to highlight academic integrity on each syllabus they produce, whether for traditional, hybrid, or online courses, and to explain the consequences of cheating, plagiarism, and other violations of academic honesty. Moreover, the college has established an Excellence in Distance Learning initiative, which has adopted a code of academic integrity meant to ensure the rules in online courses are aligned with those in traditional classes (Exhibit 11-1 Online Academic Integrity.pdf.) A survey of 249 students in spring 2009 revealed that while almost 90 percent of students were aware that the college had regulations covering cheating and plagiarism, only about half of those claimed to know what the regulations on cheating and plagiarism actually say (Exhibit 11-2 Student Integrity Survey.pdf.) The vast majority of allegations of academic dishonesty are dealt with at the faculty-student level. It is rare for a case to reach the formal disciplinary procedures under the Student Code of Conduct.

RESOLUTION OF GRIEVANCES

The college's many policies regarding integrity and fairness, including employee grievance procedures, student privacy rights, and disciplinary processes for students, are effective in creating an environment that most employees and students consider fair, safe, and equal.

The college has forthrightly dealt with complaints of discrimination and sexual harassment through a fair and deliberative process and has not shrunk from either dismissing cases that were without merit or terminating employees who have been found to violate our policies. The college's commitment to employees and their well-being is further revealed by a series of new workshops on strengths, diversity, appreciative inquiry, and other topics, organized by the Living Our Vision of Excellence Committee in academic year 2009-2010. Finally, of the 125 student Code of Conduct violations between 2003 and 2008, only two needed to go to a formal hearing for their resolution.

In spring 2009, a voluntary survey related to the college's mission and policies, including grievance processes, was provided to all college employees. Seventy-seven people elected to complete the survey. While this was only a seven percent response rate and therefore not statistically significant, feedback from the survey has provided topics for further consideration, such as:

- An Environment of Respect: Nearly all respondents reported that they had a somewhat or very respectful relationship with their peers and students, and with their direct supervisor and others in positions of authority.
- Knowledge of Grievance Processes: About half of the respondents were unsure about whether the various grievance policies at the college were clear for the various position categories within the college, and were also unsure about whether those policies reflected the value of respect.
- Student Code of Conduct: Nearly all respondents knew about the college's Student Code of Conduct, and most of them are aware of important aspects of it.
- Faculty Rights and Roles in Student Grievances and Discipline: Some faculty have expressed concern about their role in the student grievance and disciplinary process, including instructors' ability to get information about cases in which they are involved and a perceived bias toward students and away from faculty rights and needs.

A complicating issue that sometimes arises in grievance cases between faculty and students is the communication between the faculty and the administration. The Massachusetts Community College Student Code of Conduct and Grievance Procedure, FERPA rights and other privacy rights may control procedures that are used and information that may be shared during informal and formal grievance processes. To help address some of these concerns, particularly concerns about troubled or potentially violent students, the college has added a counselor to its staff, and created a Care and Concern Outreach Team.

The college's large percentage of minority students, adherence to the statewide community college affirmative action policy, robust efforts to recruit diverse employees and train search committees, and multifaceted efforts to create an environment that welcomes people of all backgrounds, particularly the college's robust NCBI program, are evidence of our commitment to diversity and non-discrimination.

Despite progress, however, the college's employees, particularly the faculty, are less diverse than the student body; more effort is required to recruit, attract, hire, and retain ethnic minorities.

The integrity of the college's financial reporting system is secure. Since it was first required in FY-2000, the college has received an unqualified opinion on every annual external audit.

Institutional Effectiveness

NECC regularly reviews and renews its principles related to integrity. Examination and revision of its core values have occurred three times since 1997 as part of the strategic planning process. Moreover, the policies and procedures described above are regularly reviewed as part of negotiations for employee collective bargaining agreements, clarified by our the College's relationship with the General Counsel's Office, and affirmed by our commitment to institutional effectiveness measures like the Key Performance Indicators.

Projection

- Faculty and academic administrators will review their approaches to setting, enforcing, and especially communicating policies related to academic honesty to assure that students clearly understand the definition and penalties for plagiarism and cheating.
- The college will continue its efforts to communicate improvements made in the support system for troubled students.
- The college will review its implementation of student disciplinary procedures, including communication with faculty about the status of cases they are involved in, to ensure an effective balance between employee and student rights in that process.
- The college will continue its efforts to create a more diverse employee, especially faculty, population.

APPENDIX

CIHE S Series Forms

Form S1. Retention and Graduation Rates

Form S2. Other Measures of Student Achievement Rates

Form S3. Licensure & Job Placement Rates

CIHE E Series Forms

Form E1A. Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators

Form E1B. Inventory of Specialized and Program Accreditation

Audited Statement and Financial Letter

List of Hard Copy Exhibits in Resource Room

LIST OF HARD COPY EXHIBITS IN RESOURCE ROOM

EXHIBITS REFERENCED IN SELF-STUDY

Exhibit Hard Copy 1-1 Frequency Tables

Exhibit Hard Copy 2-1 Institutional Advancement Reference Manual

Exhibit Hard Copy 2-EMSS Binder

Exhibit Hard Copy 3-1 BOT BYLaws

Exhibit Hard Copy 3-2 BOT Orientation Manual

Exhibit Hard Copy 3-3 Search Committee Handbook

Exhibit Hard Copy 4-1 Academic Catalog

Exhibit Hard Copy 4-2 Academic Advising

Exhibit Hard Copy 4-3 Program Reviews

Exhibit Hard Copy 4-4 Assessment Reports

Exhibit Hard Copy 4-5 SAMSYLL

Exhibit Hard Copy 4-6 Math Tutoring & Resource Center Evaluation

Exhibit Hard Copy 7-1 Long Range Plan Haverhill & Lawrence

Exhibit Hard Copy 7-2 Lib Qual Survey

Exhibit Hard Copy 7-3 Events Notebook

Exhibit Hard Copy 8-1 CD Campus Master Plan

Exhibit Hard Copy 9-1 Office of Institutional Advancement

Exhibit Hard Copy 9-2-05 Budget Guidance

Exhibit Hard Copy 9-3-2007 NEASC Online report 05

Exhibit Hard Copy 10-1 Review Process for Marketing Communications

Exhibit Hard Copy 10-8 Ron Taber interviews

Exhibit Hard Copy 11-4A Faculty Hiring Process

EXHIBITS REFERENCED IN SELF-STUDY

Planning and Evaluation
- Strategic Plan
- Academic Master Plan
- Program Review Guide

Organization and Governance
- Union Contracts
- NUP Handbook
- All College Assembly By-Laws

Academic Program
- Catalog
- Advising Handbook
- Grade Distribution Report
- Course Syllabi (Fall 10) – Memo to Deans
- Sample Learning Outcomes reports
- Sample Program Reviews
- Commonwealth Transfer Compact

Faculty
- Three-Year Plan to Increase Percentage of Courses Taught by Full Time Faculty

Students
- Student Handbook
- Observer newspaper (several copies)
- Student Senate By-Laws
- EMSS Research binder

Library
- 2007 Library Renovation Project (Beacon Arch. Assoc.)
- Library brochures

Physical and Tech Resources
- Campus Master Plan
- Utilization Study

Financial Resources
- Comprehensive Annual Financial Report 2009

Public Disclosure
- Alumni Magazine(s)
- Annual Report(s)
- Lawrence Campus – Riverwalk brochures
- Other

Integrity
- See HR web page (http://facstaff.necc.mass.edu/department and-organizations/human-resources/policies-and-pro-edures/)and print:
- Commonwealth Affirmative Action Plan (from HR web site)
- Sexual Harassment and Consensual Relationship policy (web)
- Drug-free workplace
- Employee Handbook
- Ethics training
- Financial disclosure
- Political activities restrictions
- Search Committee Handbook

Misc/Other
- Staff and Organizational Development Binder
- Living Our Vision of Excellence – Commitment to Employees Statement
- LOVE calendar of workshops
- OFSD information
- New Employee Orientation materials