

FOREWORD

A number of external and internal factors have significantly affected the growth and development of Ramapo College over the past ten years, and this comprehensive self-study comes at a distinctive time in its history, as the college approaches its fortieth anniversary. This draft of the self-study was prepared in anticipation of the decennial site visit of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education Evaluation Team, scheduled for March 21-24, 2010. The self-study represents the efforts of more than 85 members of the faculty, staff, and student body who served on the Self-Study Steering Committee and its seven study groups (see appendix A).

President Peter P. Mercer launched the self-study in his February 2008 State of the College Address and subsequent charge to the steering committee. The steering committee met weekly throughout the spring semester to develop the self-study design, and in fall 2008 and spring 2009 committee members led their respective study groups. This self-study draft presents a narrative of how Ramapo College is meeting the fourteen “standards of accreditation” established by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. The standards form the basis for the accreditation review, with a focus on planning and assessment and an eye toward continuous improvement. This is a working draft, which can be improved with feedback from the broader community. All are invited to attend the scheduled Open Forums to provide feedback and to submit comments to middlestates@ramapo.edu.

We would like to offer our sincere gratitude to President Mercer for his leadership and support; to Provost Barnett and Chief Planning Officer Echols Tobe for their guidance; to members of the Steering Committee for their dedication, leadership and tireless efforts; and to members of the study groups for their enthusiasm and research efforts. We also would like to acknowledge the generosity of our counterparts at Brooklyn College and Rowan University, who shared their experiences and advice as they completed their own self-studies a year ahead of ours.

A final version of the Ramapo College Self-Study will include a list of citations for all referenced documents and will be supported by an archive (online and hard copy) of all referenced materials. It will be completed, published, and sent to the Evaluation Team by February 1, 2010. In advance of the team’s visit, its Chair, Dr. Christopher Dahl, president of SUNY, Geneseo, will visit Ramapo College on October 8, 2009, to meet with President Mercer, the Steering Committee and various constituents on campus.

We look forward to your participation in this process.

Sincerely,

Jennefer Mazza and Miki Cammarata
Co-Chairs, Ramapo College Self-Study

CONTEXT

The steering committee identified the following goals for the self-study:

1. To present an accurate assessment of Ramapo College that documents how the college meets the fourteen standards for accreditation and serves as a tool for institutional planning, change, and growth.
2. To further emphasize the centrality of the college's revised strategic plan and to make that plan a "living document."
3. To reflect on the natural tension between the college's liberal arts mission and its commitment to professional programs.
4. To assess the impact of significant changes in leadership, curriculum, administration, and funding.

As the steering committee began to reflect on its approach to the self-study and the task ahead, a compelling theme emerged: resiliency through change. Since its last self-study, Ramapo College has experienced significant change, yet it has demonstrated resiliency and a commitment to students and excellence that transcended adversity. The following provides an overview of the most significant changes:

- Five presidents served the institution between 2000 and 2009: Scott, Chandler (interim), Smith, Pfeiffer (interim) and Mercer.
- Six vice presidents for academic affairs/provosts served the institution between 2000 and 2009: Rubin, Crawley (interim), Cody (interim), Pfeiffer, Ecker (interim), Pfeiffer and Barnett.
- Three directors oversaw enrollment management between 2000 and 2009: Tepper, Goetz, and Ortegon. (With Ortegon's recent departure, plans are underway to hire a fourth.)
- Forty-nine senior faculty members retired between 2000 and 2008. Since 2003, the college has added five new faculty lines every year; this has transformed the faculty cohort, with newer faculty representing more than half the total.
- The curriculum underwent a major change in fall 2006 with the implementation of the Curriculum Enhancement Plan (CEP).
- Several programs sought and received accreditation. The business school began the process for Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) accreditation in 2006; the teacher education program was accredited through the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) in 2007; and the social work program received accreditation from the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) in 2008. In 2007, the college took sole responsibility for the nursing program previously offered jointly with the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey and received accreditation from the National League for Nursing Accreditation Commission (NLNAC) in 2008.
- The college has greatly expanded its physical facilities with the purchase of the Havemeyer House (official residence for the college president and family and venue for receptions meetings, and fundraising events) in 2001; construction of

four new residence halls/areas (Mackin Hall in 2000, The Village in 2003, Overlook in 2005, and Laurel Hall/the Loop Road/Parking Deck in 2007); renovation and expansion of the Bill Bradley Sports and Recreation Center (2004); construction of a new academic building (Anisfield School of Business in 2007); and construction of the Sharp Sustainability Education Center and Salameno Spiritual Center, both scheduled to open in fall 2009.

- The college has shifted from “primarily residential” (defined as 25% to 49% of degree-seeking undergraduates living on campus) to “highly residential” (more than 50% living on campus).
- A strategic plan for the college was created in 2002 and revised in 2007 to make it a working document with achievable and measurable outcomes.
- State funding dropped from 43.4% of the operating budget in fiscal year 2000 to 26.8% of the operating budget in fiscal year 2010.

Following is a summary, by chapter, of the major findings in the Ramapo College Self Study Draft:

**CHAPTER 1: MISSION, LEADERSHIP, and ADMINISTRATION
Middle States Standards 1, 4 and 5**

Findings of the Self Study

Achievements

- Expanded efforts to improve communication to the community.
- Revised strategic plan, allowing mission to be implemented in assessable ways.
- Reorganized the administrative structure to strengthen the focus on student learning and operationally link budget to planning and assessment.
- Reorganized faculty governance, creating the Academic Review Committee and the Faculty Assembly Executive Council.

Challenges

- Maintaining mission while seeking new sources of funding.
- Maintaining morale in a time of change and maintaining the lines of open communication as governance structures evolve.

Recommendations

- Develop a review process for newly developing programs to ensure alignment with mission.
- Given the considerable responsibilities of the Board of Trustees, provide greater and more formal training for new members.
- Assess faculty governance structure and make changes as needed to meet the needs of a larger faculty with more new members.

**CHAPTER 2: PLANNING AND RESOURCES
Middle States Standards 2 and 3**

Findings of the Self Study

Achievements

- The college has updated its strategic plan and focused the entire community on its goals and objectives through a new process that closely links planning and budgeting.
- The college has made a substantial commitment to sustainability as evidenced by the inclusion of “sustainability” in the mission statement and strategic plan, the president becoming a signatory of the Presidents’ Climate Commitment, the building of the

Sharp Sustainability Center (to open in 2009); and substantial actions within the community to practice sustainability on and off campus.

- The college has increased the allocation of resources to academics and other programs despite very difficult economic times.
- The college has constructed much-needed new facilities and is developing plans for infrastructure repairs/replacement and the upgrading of aging science labs.
- The college has made a substantial commitment to maintaining the campus grounds.

Challenges

- The inability to accurately predict income from the state legislature hampers the college in its long-term planning, and the lack of funds for capital projects portends more difficulty in keeping aging facilities in good repair.
- The increasing interest in technology as a tool in the classroom and in personal lives will put pressure on the college to keep up with the latest advances as “old” technology ages ever more quickly.
- Difficult budget times inevitably cause stress in a community as it struggles to allocate (and reallocate) resources to ensure that strategic goals remain in focus.
- Attracting students to a public liberal arts college may become more difficult as the demographics of the state change.
- Competing for the best-prepared students will become more intense, and the ability to offer scholarships to attract them may be compromised by budget issues.

Recommendations

- Already-planned assessment of the new planning process should be ongoing to continually correct flaws and implement innovations.
- Budget projections should be carefully monitored as it is likely that the state allocation will not increase significantly in the next few years and future planning will have to be carefully focused.
- Communications about planning and budgeting must continue to improve so all in the community can feel informed and involved.
- Both traditional (e.g., New Jersey Educational Facilities Authority fix-rate bonds) and creative (e.g., engagement of an energy service company or ESCO; public/private partnership as provided under recently enacted legislation) means of financing high-priority new as well as renewal and replacement capital projects must continue to be explored.
- Campus morale should be a priority during difficult times. Ramapo's administration and faculty leadership will have to determine what communications will be needed and what processes should be in place to limit the possibility that the complex times will result in a deterioration of morale.

CHAPTER 3: INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Middle States Standard 7

Findings of the Self Study

Achievements

- Completed second full cycle of the planning, budget and assessment process.
- Institutional commitment to allocation of funds (2% of operating budget) for new strategic initiatives.
- Identified and implemented assessment software (WEAVEonline).
- Successfully modified the internal processes to accommodate assessment initiatives.

Challenges

- To continue to secure funding for strategic initiatives during a time of shrinking resources, this often means reallocating resources.
- To continue to transform the informal organization into the formal infrastructure by instituting new protocols and procedures as needed.
- How do we continue to move the institution forward in a context of shrinking resources (human, financial, physical space and technological).
- To continue to move the culture of assessment forward.
- To maintain transparency in the decision-making process.

Recommendations

- To develop a method of intra-unit and divisional communication and develop ways to link divisional action plans vertically and horizontally.
- To consolidate all the information, processes, and procedures of resource committees under the Institutional Effectiveness Committee and included it on the IE website for purposes of transparency.
- To improve the communication and transparency of assessment processes across the campus community.

CHAPTER 4: STUDENTS

Middle States Standards 8 and 9

Findings of the Self Study

Achievements

- Construction of five new residence halls resulting in a residential campus
- Constructing the Sharp Sustainability Education Center and establishment of the President's Climate Commitment Task Force

- Expansion and renovation of the Bill Bradley Sports and Recreation Center
- Creation of the Strategic Enrollment Management Committee and subcommittees
- The addition of concentrated emergency planning and crisis intervention through offices and programs such as Business Continuity and the Behavioral Intervention Team
- Strengthening the public transportation system
- Implementation of a minimum overall technology standard for all areas that includes a replacement strategy to address technology obsolescence in classrooms, computer labs, and offices.
- Formation of the Diversity Action Committee and subsequent Campus Climate Survey
- Increasing enrollment while maintaining or increasing admission standards
- Improved retention, particularly of first-year students

Challenges

- Currently the college is operating at an enrollment level of close to 5,000 FTE. This is near the capacity of the academic and student activity facilities. The college is facing capacity issues in biology, psychology, business administration, and nursing, but struggles to fill seats in other academic areas.
- Retirements or departures of key personnel have created both challenges to fill voids and opportunities to re-conceive or restructure areas, such as Student Affairs.
- Many units experienced cuts in resources and personnel, which caused the college to reevaluate programs and services and, in some cases, to reduce or diminish offerings.
- Curriculum and data changes enacted at the college over the last few years have compromised the ability to maintain complete accuracy on the NJTRANSFER Web site.
- Increasing campus diversity.

Recommendations

- Formulate an extensive International Student Recruitment Plan facilitated by the SEM Planning Committee.
- Assess and adjust the effectiveness of current reorganizations, as needed.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the current academic advisement structure and make improvements as needed.
- Consider funding all or part of the Office of Specialized Services supported by the TRIO grant, if the budget permits.
- Assess the needs of transfer students to provide better services related to advisement, registration, and student services.

CHAPTER 5: FACULTY

Middle States Standard 10

Findings of the Self Study

Achievements

- The findings indicate that the degree of engagement of our faculty members in curriculum development, revision, and review is impressive.
- Faculty hiring, development and retention practices are consistent with the college's mission and strategic goals. The administration has demonstrated a strong commitment to increasing the number of faculty in support of expanding academic programs. Ramapo has strived to continue to increase diversity on our campus and to continue to recruit faculty who bring both intercultural and international expertise to the college.
- Faculty evaluation processes associated with reappointment and tenure are supportive in their approach, aimed at promoting the growth and development of faculty members.
- Development opportunities and support for faculty have grown and have been effective at promoting teaching excellence.
- Faculty members have received strong support for acquiring new technologies that support teaching and scholarship.

Challenges

- Ramapo College will be challenged to continue to support faculty development initiatives and to continue to increase the number of faculty lines given the college's fiscal constraints.
- Increasing the ethnic diversity in our faculty.
- As a result of the growth of the college, a need to improve record-keeping methods is evident.
- The increased size of the faculty presents several challenges:
 1. The need to formalize orientation procedures that help new faculty members assimilate at Ramapo and the development of a shared vision among all faculty members.
 2. The need to provide additional secretarial support to faculty in each unit.
 3. The need to continue to work to develop a shared mission as founding faculty members retire and new faculty are integrated into the college.

Recommendations

- Improve effectiveness of institutional planning to ensure that the needs of academic programs are prioritized. In particular, the need for faculty lines and for recruiting ethnically diverse faculty members, as well as the need for additional secretarial support to faculty.

- Improve record-keeping methods throughout the college as a means of developing effective communication between units and to support assessment efforts.
- Codify orientation procedures that supporting the assimilation of new faculty members and the development of a shared vision among all faculty members.
- Improve the structure of faculty governance to address the issue of improving communication and transparency in academic decision-making.

CHAPTER 6: EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS Middle States Standards 11, 12, 14

Findings of the Self Study

Achievements

- Implementation of Curriculum Enhancement Plan.
- Development of new graduate programs and a new honors program.
- Implementation of new General Education Program.
- Development of more integrated co-curricular programming in the Office of Student Development.
- College-wide implementation of assessment activities.
- Successful program accreditations.
- Creation of the new position of Vice-Provost for Curriculum and Assessment

Challenges

- Integration of assessment activities college-wide.
- Ongoing administration and assessment of the General Education Program.
- Process for development and review of new graduate program proposals.
- Process for development and review of new program proposals, including those that are non-degree bearing.

Recommendations

- Complete a comprehensive plan for the assessment of general education.
- Fully implement recently purchased assessment software (WEAVEonline).
- Create an Office of Assessment that can house assessment library and tools and be a resource to both faculty and staff.

- Develop a plan and process for the creation of new graduate programs that addresses issues such as impact on undergraduate education and integration of liberal arts and professional studies.
- Create a Web site for general education that lists goals, requirements and other relevant information that students can access.
- Create a Web site for assessment so that all academic assessment activities can be posted and shared.
- Enhance services for transfer students (transfer credit evaluation, information sessions and review of articulation agreements) in order to ease their transition.

CHAPTER 7: RELATED EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Middle States Standard 13

Findings of the Self Study

Achievements

- Creation of the Center for Academic Success
- Establishment of the Center for Innovative and Professional Learning
- Environmental and other outreach programs at the New Jersey Meadowlands
- Integration of the former Joint BSN Program with UMDNJ
- Development of distance learning
- Revitalization of international education

Challenges

- Assessing the work of the Center for Academic Success and clarifying its role in addressing the broader issue of improving writing in the curriculum
- Evaluating and monitoring the long-term integration of the “experiential component” introduced under the Curriculum Enhancement Plan
- Maintaining Meadowlands Environmental Center funding in a climate of scarce resources
- Assuring the quality and sustainability of distance learning
- Increasing participation in international education in order to justify allocation of resources

Recommendations

- Develop a college-wide plan to assess and address the issue of writing within and across the curriculum.
- Consider having each academic major adopt its own integrative, experiential component for its program.
- Continue to pursue grant funding for the New Jersey Meadowlands.

- Develop a process for the assessment of online courses, and develop policies regarding the relationship between distance-learning and in-classroom experiences.
- Develop a plan for increasing the level of participation of both faculty and students in study-abroad programming and for embedding the international component in the curriculum through greater faculty engagement.