Report to the

Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students

of

Ramapo College of New Jersey
Mahwah, New Jersey

by

an Evaluation Team representing the
Middle States Commission on Higher Education

Prepared after study of the institution's self-study report
and a visit to the campus on March 21-24, 2010

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This report represents the views of the evaluation team as interpreted by the Chair, and it goes directly to the institution before being considered by the Commission.

It is a confidential document prepared as an educational service for the benefit of the institution. All comments in the report are made in good faith, in an effort to assist Ramapo College of New Jersey. This report is based solely on an educational evaluation of the institution and of the manner in which it appears to be carrying out its educational objectives.

AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

President/CEO:

Dr. Peter P. Mercer

Chief Academic Officer:

Dr. Beth Barnett
Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs

Chair of the Board of Trustees:

Mr. A. J. Sabath

I.   CONTEXT AND NATURE OF VISIT

Ramapo College of New Jersey is a public comprehensive institution with 5561 undergraduate and 286 graduate students (Carnegie Classification: Master's – Smaller Programs), located in Mahwah, a suburban community in Northern New Jersey close to the New York State border. It offers bachelor's degrees in a range of arts and sciences fields (with teacher certification available) as well as business, social work, and nursing. Master's degree programs currently offered include educational technology, nursing, and liberal studies. Teacher education programs hold accreditation from TEAC; other nationally accredited or certified programs include: nursing (NLN), social work (CSWE), and chemistry (ACS). Since the late 1980s, Ramapo has also been a member of the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC).

The visiting team is grateful to the entire Ramapo College community for their hospitality and helpfulness during their visit. They especially thank the co-chairs of the self-study, Professor Jennefer Mazza and Associate Vice President for Student Affairs Miki Cammarata, and their able assistant, Roberta Saiff, who scheduled dozens of appointments and provided additional materials whenever asked. The self-study document is generally well prepared, carefully organized, and well written. It groups discussions of individual standards in seven chapters. Wisely and commendably, it treats Standard 6 (Integrity) in three chapters, and in the context of three different standards. The self-study process was inclusive, involving all segments of the community, with evident opportunities for discussion and feedback beyond the study groups and steering committee—and multiple opportunities for comment on the final draft of the self-study following the team chair's visit in October 2009. In general, the self-study represents Ramapo College's programs accurately.

Affirmation of Compliance: Based on review of the self-study, the certification statement supplied by the institution, and other institutional documents and/or interviews, the team affirms that Ramapo College continues to meet the requirements of affiliation for Middle States. Based on similar reviews and documentation, the team also affirms that the institution meets Federal Title IV requirements and requirements under the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008.

II.   EVALUATION OVERVIEW

Based on its campus visit, careful review of the Self-Study and other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, trustees and others, the team concluded that Ramapo College meets the various standards for Middle States accreditation.

Ramapo College has a clearly stated mission and goals that define its place in higher education and provide a basis for institutional planning. Since the last Middle States visit, Ramapo has moved more in the direction of being a comprehensive institution, and there are still unresolved issues related to the tension between liberal arts and professional programs. Since the arrival of a new president in 2005, the institution's goals have been streamlined. Improved planning processes are in place, especially as they relate to resource allocation. Ramapo is to be particularly commended for the Strategic Priority Initiative Funding program, whereby two

percent of the institution's budget is set aside annually for initiatives that support the mission and goals.

Ramapo has made intelligent use of limited resources in recent years, despite declining support from the state. The campus's physical plant and grounds are well maintained, the College has tripled the number of students living on campus through the construction of handsome new residence halls. Although adjustments in programming still need to be made, this construction has the potential to transform the undergraduate experience. Throughout this growth and change, the institution has balanced its budget; and bonded indebtedness for buildings has been managed well. Ramapo's institutional advancement operation is to be commended for providing an increasing level of private support and for relatively high involvement in annual giving by alumni.

Governance at the campus level is generally sound and effective. Ramapo's trustees are dedicated and committed to the College and exercise appropriate authority and oversight. In terms of shared governance mechanisms for faculty and staff, the team suggests that Ramapo explore the creation of a more broadly based shared governance structure that would involve all college constituencies—faculty, students, and professional staff in various categories. Ramapo's leadership and administration provide appropriate support to the mission of the institution and are appropriately qualified to serve. Organizational structures at the vice presidential level are designed to emphasize planning and to stress the centrality of student learning by integrating student affairs operations under the Provost. The range of reports and functions in the Provost's area is therefore quite broad, and reporting lines and organization may need reexamination and further evaluation. Ramapo's historic commitment to an interdisciplinary curriculum is reflected in the organization of its five schools and the presence of convening groups for programs rather than traditional disciplinary departments. Further support for the administrative needs of convening groups and programs may be needed.

Faculty members are appropriately qualified. The institution is to be commended for adding five new tenure-track faculty members in each of the past four years. Ramapo College is at a generational turning point, as members of the "founding faculty" from the early 1970s have or will reach retirement age. Attention therefore needs to be paid to orientation and acculturation of new faculty and developing a new cadre of senior faculty for leadership in shared governance. Since one-third of courses are taught by adjuncts, further orientation and training for adjuncts should be a high priority. Evaluation procedures for faculty reflect the institution's mission, and faculty exercise appropriate levels of control over curriculum decisions. More attention needs to be paid, however, to increasing the diversity of the faculty.

Ramapo's enrollment management plan, derived from the College's strategic plan, seeks to maintain the institution's current size at 5000 undergraduates while increasing diversity, improving the academic profile of the entering class, and reducing the number of transfer students. These goals are ambitious and may be somewhat incompatible. The College needs to study and address this issue, especially as it affects recruitment of a more diverse student body. As tuition and fees have risen in recent years, the proportion of lower-income students has declined. Relative lack of need-based institutional aid could result in further loss of middle and lower-income students. Ramapo provides an appropriate range of services and programs to support the needs of a diverse student body, including a commendable program of peer mentors

for first-year seminars. The creation of a residential campus over the past decade has changed Ramapo College, but the transformation is not yet complete. Student services must continue to develop programming for residence halls and for a more residential student population.

Ramapo College offers educational programs in 36 majors, 29 minors, and 6 certificate programs. Master's degree programs are also offered in three fields, and two other graduate programs have or will shortly be approved. Its programs display appropriate content, rigor and coherence. The institution's general education program reflects institutional values and is congruent with current practices in general education. As part of the Curriculum Enhancement Plan, Ramapo reconfigured its curriculum changing from three-credit to four-credit courses for students and reallocating faculty teaching load, effective in 2006-07. This reform has affected general education courses and the curriculum as a whole. The CEP provides for an experiential component in all courses. Oversight and assessment for this aspect of the curriculum are lacking. The team recommends that clearer policies and expectations for the experiential component be put in place, monitored, and assessed. The team also recommends, in light of the changes wrought by the CEP, that the College develop a planned and sustainable process for the assessment of the General Education program. Too much time has passed with only marginal progress on assessment of general education.

As pointed out above, Ramapo College has made significant progress in planning. In the past five years, significant steps have been taken to improve efficiency, link planning and budgeting, and use assessment to drive decision-making. More work remains to be done, however. While processes to assess institutional effectiveness are in place, especially through the work of the Institutional Effectiveness Committee, and there is greater accountability in budgetary decisions because of the Strategic Priority Incentive Funding process, the College needs to identify, establish and monitor on a regular basis performance indicators that are linked to its strategic goals and objectives. In academic units and at the campus level, progress on the assessment of student learning outcomes has been very slow. Assessment practices vary widely among different programs. Major tools for assessment (such as NSSE and CLA data) are not effectively used to drive assessment and program improvement. The College must attend immediately to developing and fully implementing a documented, organized, and sustained assessment process for all academic programs. Too many programs—and the institution as a whole—are at the early or middle stages of implementing assessment practices that meet the expectations of the twenty-first century. The College community has the ability and resources to meet this challenge, but it must act.

III. COMPLIANCE WITH ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

Chapter 1: Mission, Governance, and Administration

This section covers Standards 1, 4, and 5.

The institution meets these standards.

Standard 1: Mission and Goals

Since its last decennial review, Ramapo College has redefined its mission, moving from being an undergraduate liberal arts college to becoming a comprehensive institution, with undergraduate and master's degree programs in professional fields. The current Mission Statement, first approved in 2002 and reaffirmed in 2005, describes Ramapo College as "a comprehensive institution dedicated to the promotion of teaching and learning within a strong liberal arts-based curriculum." In keeping with Standard 1, the statement defines Ramapo's purpose in the context of higher education, while stressing the institution's continuing commitment to a liberal arts-based curriculum as justification for its designation as New Jersey's public liberal arts college.

In the Mission Statement of 2002, as in the more recent revision of the goals and objectives in 2005, changes were made with broad participation of the college community and in consideration of the environmental threats and opportunities facing the college. The mission reflects the institution's goals and aspirations. To some extent, however, market and environmental factors such as the continuing erosion of State support seem to have driven the development of new programs; and enrollments in professional programs such as business, nursing, and social work have grown markedly since 2002, reflecting both market demand and Ramapo's move toward a more comprehensive mission.

The mission statement also determines the distinctive academic organization that Ramapo has chosen—namely, Thematic Learning Communities—and defines their nature and relevance. Through the so-called Four Pillars (interdisciplinary curriculum, international education, intercultural understanding, and experiential learning), Ramapo defines the essential character of its educational offerings. The Mission Statement also provides guidance to the faculty and staff in providing student services and creating an enriched learning environment. Moreover, the Statement commits the College to the enterprise of fostering a diverse and inclusive community. Both mission and goals are recognized and approved by the governing body of the institution.

When President Peter Mercer arrived in 2005, he began the process of "refreshing" the 2002 strategic plan, which had listed six overarching goals and some twenty-two long-range goals in no order of priority. A widely representative task force chaired by the president reduced six general goals to three and identified new objectives under each goal which were intended to be "specific enough to assess progress but not so detailed that they dictate the way each unit will approach" the goals. The general goals are: 1) enhancing academic excellence; 2) investing in the future; and 3) enriching college life and community presence. The college has also identified six underlying principles that guide the strategic plan. While it is commendable that the college has been able to simplify and better organize the previous vague and complex plan, the objectives listed under each goal are still stated in somewhat abstract and general terms that may be difficult to quantify and therefore measure.

Non-binding Findings for Improvement:

- Review and refine the objectives in the current strategic plan and state them in more measurable/quantifiable terms, providing performance indicators to assist evaluation at the end of the planning cycle and drive institutional improvement.

- As pointed out in the self-study, there is a tension between the college's stated commitment to a liberal arts-based curriculum and the recent development of professional programs. The college community needs to more clearly understand and then articulate how its professional programs are "based" in the liberal arts and then determine how all programs serve a single, coherent mission. As the Self-Study recommends, the college community should more clearly define its commitment to liberal arts and "assess all programs in light of this vision" (p. 21).

Standard 4: Leadership and Governance

Significant changes in leadership and governance have occurred since the last Middle States Review in 2000. Between 2000 and 2009, the campus saw four presidents, six chief academic officers, and four enrollment management directors. The Presidency has now stabilized with the appointment of President Mercer in 2005. The appointment of Provost Barnett in 2006 has added stability in academic affairs. Accompanying these administrative changes were a revised strategic plan, a revised curriculum, building of new facilities, and an integrated approach to planning, budgeting, and assessment. Commendable achievements include:

- President Mercer's mission-centered approach, combined with his effective communication skills, has helped the college set forth in a new direction. He has brought a number of improvements to the campus, not the least of which is to keep open the lines of communication with various college constituencies including faculty, staff, and students.

- The reorganization of the Provost's area to include all student-related activities including academic affairs, student affairs, enrollment management, information technology services, the Center for Innovative and Professional Learning, put student learning visibly at the center of the College's mission. This became evident to several team members at a meeting with student leaders. Each of the students commented on the fact that they feel that they are at the center of the institution.

- The revised faculty governance structure, which added a new Faculty Assembly Executive Council to complement the plenary meetings of the Faculty Assembly, gives a clearer voice to the faculty and more efficient mechanisms for decision-making in areas such as the curriculum.

- Student participation in governance through both the student member of the Board of Trustees and the Student Government Association. In discussion with the president, new policies have been established to ensure student representation on major college committees as well.

Non-binding Findings for Improvement:

- The Team found the Board of Trustees to be actively engaged in policy decisions and dedicated to the College. At this point, there are a number of vacancies on the Board, because of gubernatorial slowness in making appointments. Several board members have

stayed on well after the expiration of their terms. The team suggests that the College take a more proactive role and recommend qualified candidates (e.g., important donors, alumni, or local business leaders) to the new administration rather than waiting for vacancies to be filled.

- The Board of Trustees currently has an informal training program for new members. In preparation for new appointments, the President and the Board leadership should develop a more formal orientation program for new members.

There was some concern among some faculty and staff about lack of communication on campus. It is the team's conclusion that there is adequate communication between the president and various individual constituencies, but considerably less communication among and between those constituencies. We therefore recommend consideration of a more broadly based shared governance structure.

Recommendations:

- Establish a college-wide forum as part of shared governance system in which all constituencies can sit down, share information, and have substantive discussion. Work toward shared all-campus governance where all constituencies can come together.
- Provide greater faculty voice on committees such as the Institutional Effectiveness Committee, Position Review Committee, and the Budget Committee, and reexamine other important task forces to ensure adequate faculty representation.

Standard 5: Administration

According to Standard 5, an institution's administrative structure and services should facilitate learning and research/scholarship, foster quality improvement, and support the institution's organization and governance. This is the case at Ramapo College.

Responsibility for providing institutional vision and leadership is vested in Ramapo's president, who serves as chief executive officer and reports to a fully empowered board of trustees. With a commitment to liberal arts, appropriate degrees, and a background—and qualifications and accomplishments—in teaching, research, and professional service along with prior experience as a professor of law, dean, and vice-president at two universities, President Mercer possesses an appropriate blend of qualities needed to lead the institution. Other senior administrators are similarly well qualified and experienced.

Ramapo's administrative structure is shaped by the goals of the president and the perceived needs of the institution at the present time. Reporting lines reflect this. Although there are four divisions (academic affairs, administration and finance, institutional advancement, and student affairs), there are only three senior officers who report directly to the president: the provost, the "chief planning officer," and the vice president for advancement. In order to focus on the full range of student learning and to emphasize its centrality to the College's mission, administrators in student affairs report to the Provost as chief academic officer. The chief planning officer

serves in lieu of a traditional vice president for finance and administration, thus emphasizing the importance for Ramapo of a "process that formally links planning, budgeting, and assessment, with the strategic plan at its center" (*Self-Study*, 18). The third senior administrator carries out the traditional functions of institutional advancement, also including grant writing and sponsored research development.

Ramapo's somewhat untraditional administrative organization supports the teaching and learning mission of the college and the research and scholarly activities of its faculty well. Though particular areas may be stretched somewhat thin, there is a level of qualified administrative staffing appropriate to the size, scope, and goals of the College; the current mode of organization seems to be generally understood; and administrators are supported by adequate information and decision-making systems. Certainly, the elevation of the chief planning officer conduces to more effective planning and fosters quality improvement, especially at the institutional level.

Because all student-related operations have been added to the various other units under the Provost (the deans of the five schools, the library, the chief information officer, a vice-provost for curriculum and assessment, the associate vice president for budget and personnel), the range of reports to that office is very wide. Bringing all functions related to student learning under a single office has many benefits, but also raises problems. The range of functions supervised by the provost may be too wide. And some units—student affairs, for example—run the danger of being lost or effaced in the variety of units and roles brought under a single senior administrator. Consequently, this organizational structure may not facilitate learning and scholarship as much as possible or maximize the potential for quality improvement. Ramapo College will need to attend to these questions, as the college community assesses the effectiveness of these (relatively new) structures.

Ramapo's administrative structure and organization support the college's leadership and governance. Indeed, at the middle and lower levels of administration, the College's distinctive nature and values are manifest in its structure: faculty are grouped in five interdisciplinary schools; and convening groups replace traditional academic departments. This makes sense, given Ramapo's history and its commitment to interdisciplinary programs and inquiry. Under this system, however, considerable reliance is placed upon the faculty members who serve as conveners. They are not always provided with the support—clerical, released time, operating budgets—needed to administer their programs effectively.

Non-binding findings for improvement:

- Carefully assess the organization of the Provost's Office, weighing the costs and benefits of combining the various units under a single organization and reexamining the wide range of reports to see if new, stronger lines of authority and communication can be established.

- Review the role of conveners across the campus and increase support if needed.

Chapters 1, 4, and 5: Integrity

Standard 6: Integrity

Standard 6 is quite literally *integral* to all operations of an educational institution. Wisely, the Ramapo self-study treats this standard in no fewer than three of its seven chapters—and in connection with six related standards. Ramapo meets this standard.

In the areas of leadership, governance, and administration, there are clearly stated codes of ethics for both officers of the college and trustees. Briefings on the New Jersey Uniform Ethics Code are distributed to all employees. Faculty are bound by the Scholarly Capacity Rule. The trustees regularly file conflict of interest forms. In dealing with students, the College demonstrates a commitment to an inclusive community and a supportive campus climate for individuals from all backgrounds. The College is to be commended for its accomplishments in creating a barrier-free living and learning environment.

The College also demonstrates continuing concern for diversity in all its operations. In student affairs, there are policies and procedures in place that ensure equitable treatment and provide means for complaint, appeal or redress—in grade appeals, student conduct issues, and academic jeopardy, as well as in instances of discrimination or harassment. These policies are set forth in the student handbook and other publications readily available to students and other members of the community. The College supports access and diversity through a variety of programs, including The Educational Opportunity Fund. It also supports health and safety through its policies and through a Center for Health and Counseling on campus.

The College also provides adequate information about its programs and facilities to students and the general public. Such information is available on-line, as well as in print publications, in such a form as to be accessed readily.

In academic affairs, adequate procedures are in place for faculty evaluation, with clear standards for reappointment, promotion, and tenure stated in the *Faculty Handbook*. The standards are appropriate to the institution. The *Handbook* also contains information on Trustees' policies and locally negotiated terms and conditions of employment, which supplement the AFT Master Agreement, which is also made regularly available to all members of the bargaining unit. Policies and procedures for faculty evaluation appear to be followed, and there are adequate grievance procedures in place, both through the union contract and through the Employee Relations and Ethics Officer. The College has recently appointed an ombudsperson, who also provides mediation services.

The College generally presents itself truthfully to outside constituencies and the public. The team has one concern, however. Because of loose oversight and vague definitions, the experiential learning requirements created as part of the recently enacted Curriculum Enhancement Plan may lay the College open to questions of integrity in the curriculum. The College could be left in the position either of appearing to misrepresent a key element of its curriculum or appearing to condone inequitable or inconsistent treatment of students.

Non-binding findings for improvement:

Ramapo College is committed to diversity, but as Chapter 5 of the self-study makes clear, its progress in enhancing racial and ethnic diversity among the faculty and student body has been minimal in the past five years. The College might profitably consider the development of a comprehensive diversity plan.

Chapter 2: Planning and Resources

This section covers standards 2 and 3. The institution meets these standards.

Standard 2: Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal

Since 2005 great strides have been made in developing a comprehensive planning process at the campus level and then using the process to drive assessment of the institution's programs in various units, thereby improving programs and services. Planning activities have been geared to increase the college's revenues and to provide the resources needed to accomplish its mission. Planning proceeds by developing objectives for the different operational units in the academic and administrative areas. The institution has remained flexible and responded effectively to the difficult environment in which it must operate.

The self-study indicates widespread participation in planning. Our interviews confirmed active involvement not only by faculty, staff and students, but also by the Trustees, alumni, members of the Foundation Board, and the local community. As the planning process has evolved in recent years, issues of transparency and questions regarding equitable allocation of resources have arisen. As a solution, the college has moved to a more centralized and coordinated allocation process. This approach involves planning at the organizational unit level and leads to revisions of the plan and appropriate budgetary adjustments. This process has enhanced participation in planning and evaluation of goals.

Planning in non-academic units is overseen by the Chief Planning Officer, who reports directly to the president. In consultation with their staff, unit directors review resource needs in relation to their goals and attempt to make decisions that will contribute to the attainment of the College's mission. Their plans are then presented to the divisional Vice Presidents who forward them to the President's Cabinet for final approval. Because of the enhanced role of the Chief Planning Officer, there are greater accountability and clearer lines of responsibility for goal attainment at the unit level. The self-study indicates that, because of these modifications, assessment will improve and this will, in turn, lead to the renewal of the strategic plan and modification of unit objectives.

In 2008, the Office of Information Technology developed a five-year plan for information technology services, covering short term and longer term (three to five years). Specific goals are identified in five areas: application development, client services, infrastructure, instructional design, and telecommunications. These goals are well prepared and address specific priorities; they are quantifiable and set the stage for assessment of effectiveness.

In academic affairs, convening groups conduct initial planning in their discipline and across disciplines. Plans for courses and programs are reviewed by the Academic Review Committee and, when appropriate, by the Faculty Assembly as a whole. The deans of the five schools review the actions of the convening groups and unit councils and then make recommendations to the Provost. As in non-academic units, plans from the schools must be approved by the Cabinet. Evidence of planning activities in Academic Affairs is provided by the Provost's detailed annual report on Completed Goals, On-going Activities, and Goals for 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 made available to the team.

In the midst of a difficult fiscal situation, Ramapo's strengthened planning process has yielded a number of benefits.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices:

- Maintaining a balanced budget in spite of repeated reductions in state support through sound fiscal management, cost cutting, and judicious allocation of resources.
- Building handsome new facilities for students that have tripled the residential capacity of the campus, enhancing the student experience and assisting in meeting enrollment goals.
- The construction a new Sports and Recreation Center and excellent academic space for the Anisfield School of Business through public-private partnerships.
- Establishment of the Strategic Priority Incentive Funding program, in which 2% of the budget is set aside annually for high-priority initiatives, in support of the College's vision and goals.
- The development of a thoughtful Instructional Technology Plan that will guide the institution for the coming five years.

Recommendation:

- The institution should fully integrate planning processes at the College level with the assessment of student learning outcomes in academic affairs.

Standard 3: Institutional Resources

Despite the sharp downward trend in state support, Ramapo College has the financial resources necessary to carry out its mission. In a 2009-10 all-funds budget of $134 million, tuition (along with related fees) is the main source of revenue. State appropriations, at 27 percent, have fallen to third place as a revenue source, after auxiliary services. In this environment, the College has managed consistently to balance its operating budget in the past five years.

Human resources are sufficient. The institution has been able to attract highly qualified faculty and staff to carry out its mission. Most notably, Ramapo has put a high priority on adding tenure-track faculty, and in the past four years has successfully added five new faculty per year, all of them apparently strong hires.

Since 1988 there has been little or no state funding for capital projects. Ramapo has therefore been obliged to bond recent construction projects and in the past year has instituted a Capital Improvement Fee to support critical maintenance. Ramapo determines its own facilities plan and is now solely responsible for construction, maintenance, and repairs. Because of these trends, the cost of debt service has risen to $18.6 million in 2009. Residence hall room fees provide two thirds of the payments on debt service. As interest rates increase, debt service may become more difficult in coming fiscal cycles.

Under the direction of the Associate Vice President for Administration and Finance, the Facilities Services Office oversees 94 unionized employees. They are responsible for maintaining 300 acres of grounds and 1,632,872 square feet of usable space. Condition assessments are used to plan for the repair of the facilities and equipment and to secure the necessary funds through the budget process. The physical appearance of the campus is excellent, though Ramapo's master plan has not been updated since 1999.

The Office of Budget and Fiscal Planning provides efficient fiscal oversight. They monitor how the units spend their funds and ensure they follow their plans and do not overspend. If necessary, they take corrective action. They have created a Contingency Review Committee composed of senior managers that evaluates emergency situations and finds a way to allocate existing funds to deal with emergencies. An aggressive cost-cutting program has been implemented and has achieved positive results.

The Ramapo Foundation is a bright spot in the resource picture. Under the direction of the Vice President for Advancement, its goals are set by the Board of Trustees and implemented by a small but effective staff. The office also oversees requests for grants and provides mentoring and support in garnering grants, through faculty workshops and the services of a full-time grants writer. The College is currently in the quiet phase of a $40 million capital campaign, and so far has secured over $21 million in gifts, grants and commitments. During the past several years, private donors have provided major support for buildings and endowments. Ramapo's alumni giving rate, 13.3 percent, exceeds that of all other public colleges in the state. Gifts for unrestricted, restricted, endowment, and capital projects have consistently increased over the past five years.

For instructional technology, the College uses SCT Banner to provide back office data processing. It is an application on a single Oracle database. Because the system is user-driven, staff members can request their own reports as needed, if they have the appropriate security clearance for the data. The system also provides efficient energy management for the facility. Support is also provided for online courses, e-portfolio, WEAVE online, grading and assessment programs and a simulated trading floor for the business school. The Office of Instructional Technology has been successful in equipping a large part of the campus with Wi-Fi. Another technology resource for faculty is the Instructional Design Center, where knowledgeable faculty and IT staff provide training and support in the use of hardware and software.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices:
- Refinancing its bonded indebtedness to achieve a saving of $3.5 million per year.
- Reducing Utility costs by participating in a peak demand energy reduction program.

- Entering into a sustainability initiative that has enabled Ramapo to install 81 solar panels at no cost.
- Keeping the buildings and grounds in beautiful condition.
- Raising significant funds for the Foundation from private donors and foundations during very difficult economic times.

Non-binding finding for improvement:

As funds become available, update and extend the Facilities Master Plan to guide future capital projects.

Chapter 3: Institutional Effectiveness

Standard 7: Institutional Assessment

The institution meets this standard.

In a conscious effort to enhance institutional effectiveness, Ramapo College has taken significant steps over the past five years to improve efficiency, link planning and budgeting, and use assessment to drive decision-making. These efforts began in 2005 with the revision and "refreshing" of the College's strategic plan. This process was accompanied by administrative reorganization that put the Chief Planning Officer in charge of all finance and administration units, with a direct reporting relationship to the president that also serves to underline the centrality of planning. At the same time, the Office of Institutional Research and Planning was moved to report to the Chief Planning Officer. During the past five years, as well, the College has formed a number of committees to support institutional effectiveness, most notably the Institutional Effectiveness Committee, which has played a critical role in helping develop a culture of assessment in administrative units.

Throughout this process, the Office of Institutional Research and Planning has provided important leadership and support in the College's attempts to implement effective assessment of administrative units. At this time, however, it does not serve a similar role in the College's assessment of academic programs.

The funding for strategic initiatives at Ramapo comes from a dedicated account, the Strategic Priority Incentive Fund. In identifying priorities for funding, the Institutional Effectiveness Committee uses a mapping matrix, which provides a decision-making framework to evaluate whether programs and functions are mission-critical. This further rationalizes the planning and resource-allocation process. The College has also begun to implement the WEAVE assessment software in order to more effectively track assessment and institutional performance.

Although the College has made admirable progress in ensuring institutional effectiveness, two concerns need to be addressed. First, the College's strategic goals and objectives are not linked to specific performance indicators, which makes it impossible to assess the institution's progress toward meeting those goals and objectives. Second, it is not clear how the institution has

attempted or managed to "close the loop" effectively on a number of important, institutional assessments (e.g., CLA, NSSE).

Significant accomplishments, progress, or exemplary/innovative practices:

- The College has established a Strategic Planning Incentive Funding process, with 2% of the institution's operating budget dedicated to activities that support its strategic goals.
- The Institutional Effectiveness Committee plays a central and highly visible role in overseeing and leading effectiveness activities; its role in the Strategic Planning Incentive Funding allocation process is especially impressive.

Non-binding findings for improvement:

- The institution should incorporate the expertise of the Office of Institutional Research and Planning in the assessment of academic programs or identify some other structure for assuring that academic programs and departments have access to the data and assistance they need to conduct effective outcomes assessment.
- The institution should finalize and implement its plans to evaluate its new planning process.

Recommendation:

- The College should identify, establish and monitor on a regular basis performance indicators that are linked to its strategic goals and objectives.

Chapter 4: Student Admissions and Retention

Standard 8: Student Admissions and Financial Aid; Standard 9: Student Support Services

The institution meets these standards.

Ramapo College's mission to provide a student-centered, liberal arts education to a largely undergraduate population, stated clearly in its print and electronic materials, properly recognizes that the diverse student populations it serves have varied educational goals and distinct needs. We find support for this mission among the college constituencies, as evidenced in the self-study, College documents, and on-campus interviews with the visiting team. An enrollment management plan, derived from the College's strategic plan, seeks to maintain the current size at 5,000 undergraduates while increasing diversity, improving the academic profile of the entering class, and reducing the number of transfer students. Ramapo properly recognizes that meeting these goals requires new initiatives that are grounded in enrollment data and that acknowledge the geo-demographic distribution of college-age students in New Jersey. Another enrollment goal is to increase first to second year retention of undergraduates from 88% to over 90%. An assessment of retention rates among different populations of students is underway and will inform the retention efforts.

The enrollment plan is ambitious. Attempting to change the class profile along multiple dimensions simultaneously will be difficult. Raising the mean SAT score to 1200 may work against out-of-state and minority recruiting efforts, for example. The most likely target group to increase ethnic diversity at Ramapo is Hispanic students (one of the only groups with increasing numbers of New Jersey high school graduates), but many of these students will be first-generation college students. Measures of GPA and academic rigor may be more appropriate indicators of preparation in making admissions decisions on these students than SAT scores.

Financial aid is a pressing concern for many students at Ramapo. The majority of students at the College receive no institutional aid. More than 80% of institutional aid is offered as merit scholarships, leaving a typical Ramapo student to fund his or her College education with family resources and loans. The proportion of students with family income below $60,000 has decreased from 33% to 29% in three years, suggesting that the effects of a weak economy and rising tuition costs are putting middle class students at risk. Relative lack of institutional need-based aid could result in a bimodal distribution of students in socio-economic terms.

Students enter Ramapo with distinctly different levels of academic preparation and educational goals, challenging academic support services to meet the needs of all students.   We find that Ramapo is meeting this challenge. An enthusiastic and well-trained group of peer mentors from the first-year seminars are singled out for praise in a recent advising survey. The Center for Academic Advising and First-Year Experience (CAAFYE) has used the survey results to propose ways to regularize and improve advising by the professional staff (for first-year and undeclared majors) and faculty within the majors.

We find a deep commitment at Ramapo to recognize and support the needs of a diverse student body. Students identify the multi-cultural nature of Ramapo as an important component of the college and a reason that some chose to attend. Staff members often cite diversity first when asked the mission of Ramapo. Actions over the past several years by the Diversity Action Committee and others in response to campus climate surveys have led to a diversity lecture series linked to convocation and the summer reading for new students, creation of the position of ombudsperson, and a protocol for responding to bias incidents. As Ramapo matures as a residential campus, it should continue to seek ways to foster a campus climate characterized by open and continuous communication that deepens the understanding of the individual's identity and culture while promoting respect for differences within the Ramapo community and the larger world.

The creation of a residential campus over the past decade has fundamentally changed Ramapo on many levels. The tripling of the residential student population changed how students interact with each other and the campus community. Students are more likely to attend evening programs, work out in the newly remodeled Bradley Center, and join clubs. Chance encounters among students are more likely to lead to new friendships.

Student services have worked hard to develop in tandem with the residential campus. We find that student programming and services promote student growth along both intellectual and social dimensions. The student life staff are dedicated professionals who care deeply about the well-being and education of students. They understand that students grow in many ways beyond the academic in a residential environment and they understand that growth requires the right balance

between control of the social environment by professional and peer-mentor staff and the freedom for students to mature by experience.

The transformation of the campus, however, is not complete. The construction of residence halls is only the first step of many to create a fully realized residential campus. As a campus becomes active 24/7, programming needs change and the College must provide more wellness and safety education. Successful programming is student-initiated and driven and must change with the interests of students. Student leaders cited the creation of the student allocations committee as a good example of student-initiated programming. At the same time, they lamented the continued exodus from campus on the weekends and were reluctant to schedule events then for fear of low turnout.

Significant accomplishments, progress, and exemplary/innovative practices:

- We were impressed with the strong and pervasive pride in Ramapo as a public liberal arts institution. There is an important place in higher education for small, residential colleges where students from all walks of life and circumstances share in the benefits of an affordable education.

Non-binding findings for improvement:

- Consider whether using a more holistic approach in the evaluation of students for admission and scholarships will promote the College's diversity goals.

- Evaluate the benefits of a more balanced distribution of institutional aid between merit and need-based programs as a way of meeting the enrollment goals of the strategic plan.

Recommendation:

- Evaluate the potentially incompatible goals of the enrollment management plan and determine which goals should take priority.

Chapter 5: Faculty

Standard 10: Faculty

The institution meets this standard.

The College employs 211 full-time faculty members (Fall 2008 data). They hold appropriate degrees and credentials (93 percent hold terminal degrees in their fields); they are appropriately deployed in the various degree programs. As a relatively young institution, Ramapo College is at a turning point. Significant numbers of the "founding faculty" from the early 1970s have recently retired and others may be expected to do so in the next several years. Faculty culture has been shaped by the original experimental, interdisciplinary ethos of the institution, and some of the current discussions of educational goals among the faculty are driven by reactions to recent changes from that mission and ethos. Though issues surrounding the liberal arts and

professional programs are in contention, there seems to be no great gulf between more senior faculty and more recently hired faculty. Though there are reservations about some of the new directions the College has taken, the team encountered strong manifestations of loyalty and pride in the distinctive institution of higher education that has evolved from its founding to the present day.

In the past four years, the College has reallocated funds to hire five additional faculty per year. Over all, 56 tenure-track faculty have been hired in the past five years. The additional lines have been divided among the five schools; the vitas of the new faculty suggest successful recent hires. Mentoring and orientation practices for new faculty are relatively informal and vary considerably from school to school. Although mentoring has expanded in recent years, orientation programs appear to be limited, especially in the case of adjuncts. Based on recommendations from a Faculty Assembly Executive Council task force report, the Provost's office is presently developing a more comprehensive orientation program. Through the Faculty Resource Center, professional development resources are available to both beginning and experienced faculty. Because of budgetary difficulties, however, resources for the Center have been reduced in the past three years. Ramapo College provides sabbaticals, but they are relatively limited in number, averaging four per year since 2004-05. Further support for grant-writing and sponsored research activities might also be helpful. As the self-study notes, faculty members have secured external research grants at a relatively modest pace: $459,567 since 2005.

Members of the Ramapo faculty are evaluated on four criteria: teaching effectiveness, scholarship (broadly defined, as appropriate), service to the college and community, and professional responsibility. Before tenure, evaluation is done annually through the unit personnel committee, the unit council, the dean and the provost. Evaluation of tenured faculty takes place every five years. Teaching is taken seriously and carefully considered. Faculty report that teaching effectiveness is vitally important to achieving tenure; faculty members whose performance is unsatisfactory do not advance to the tenure-decision year. Teaching and service responsibilities beyond the classroom are also important. Faculty members' commitment to interdisciplinary studies, intercultural understanding, international education, and experiential learning—the "four pillars" of Ramapo's mission--has been consistent from the days of the founding. Although there are limitations on faculty ability to exercise some of these commitments (e.g., paucity of international programs) and there are problems in administering the experiential learning component of courses, the "pillars" are taken into account in the evaluation process.

Because of the relatively flat governance structure, faculty involvement appears to be strongest at the convening unit level and the school council. Responsibilities for leadership in the plenary Faculty Assembly and its Executive Council seem to fall to senior faculty, many of them members of the founding generation. As the changing of the guard continues to occur, the College may wish to give some consideration to a governance-based version of succession planning. Faculty governance—and indeed all shared governance structures—may need to be reevaluated and further reformed in light of this situation.

In sum, Ramapo College lives up to the standard: the faculty is appropriately prepared and qualified; educational programs and curricula are designed, maintained and updated by the faculty; the faculty receives support for carrying out basic faculty functions; the criteria for

tenure, promotion, and professional advancement are clear. Mentoring and supervision are available and given freely, and principles of academic freedom are respected.   The team identified two areas of concern, however: orientation and development of new faculty, especially adjunct faculty (who teach approximately one-third of all courses); and the accountability of faculty governance structures as they relate to curriculum and policy.

Accordingly, the team makes the following **non-binding findings for improvement** based on recommendations in the Self-Study:

- Codify and further develop orientation procedures to help new faculty assimilate to campus culture and traditions and participate in a shared vision; improve orientation and training for adjuncts.
- Improve the structure of faculty governance (and shared governance in general) and the structure of interchange between the faculty and administration to improve communication and transparency in academic decision-making.
- Develop further means of creating a sense of community, not only among faculty but also among the professional staff and other employee groups on campus.

Chapter 6: Academic Programs and Assessment

This section covers Standards 11, 12, and 14. The institution meets these standards.

Standard 11: Educational Offerings

Ramapo College of New Jersey offers educational programs in 36 majors, 29 minors, and 6 certificate programs. In addition, the college has developed a ten-course general education program with well-designed goals and objectives. An Honors Program for about 30 freshmen was thoroughly revised and offered for the first time in Fall 2009. The syllabi for all courses are required to include clearly defined learning outcomes. The general education program is centered on the four pillars of the College's mission: interdisciplinary curriculum, international education, intercultural understanding, and experiential learning. In an effort to increase course rigor and provide faculty more time for scholarship, in 2006 the College reconfigured the course load for students and the teaching responsibilities for faculty. All courses were required to contain an experiential learning component. This is a laudable innovation; however, the requirement is "unmonitored" and needs to be evaluated more carefully (see recommendation below).

Forty-one percent of Ramapo's undergraduates are transfers. The College strives to provide the necessary courses and sections for this large population. This presents a challenge, however, in terms of course offerings and enrollment management. In addition, a recent study of the early performance of transfer versus non-transfer students has revealed that transfer students do not do as well as the non-transfers in course grades, term GPA, and cumulative GPA. Through the Center for Academic Advisement and First-Year Experience, the College is exploring ways to provide enhanced services for transfer students.

Master's level graduate programs are offered in Liberal Arts, Nursing, and Educational Technology. Two others, in Educational Leadership and Sustainability Studies are planned.

Although they are small, Ramapo's graduate programs seek to capitalize on the College's strengths and further the College's commitment to meet the needs of the region.

Ramapo also provides students with a number of tools that support the academic programs including the library and co-curricular activities including cooperative education, internships, alternate spring break, lectures, clubs and organizations. Among the library's offerings is a new Information Literacy Program. Designed to weave information literacy into the students' four-year course of study, it involves not only the general education offerings but also courses in the student's major. Staying true to its mission, the curriculum requires an experiential learning component for each of the courses offered. As noted above, implementation of this component across the curriculum needs to be monitored carefully.

Non-binding findings for improvement:

- While the rationale for changing the courses from three to four credits is sound, this innovation reduces the number of courses a student can take during his or her career and could limit the number of electives in the major, especially given the ten general education courses that are required. As part of a general assessment of the curriculum, a study should be done to look at this from the student perspective. For example, in a more prescriptive major like science, are students taking fewer upper level electives as a result of this change?

- The students enrolled in the three graduate programs represent a small percentage of the College's total enrollment. Some programs, such as the Master of Arts in Liberal Arts, use primarily regular faculty. Others, such as the Master of Science in Nursing, use primarily adjuncts. Depending on how these programs and future ones are staffed, this could put a drain on the College resources. In any event, clearer criteria for the establishment of new graduate programs are needed. The cost-benefit ratio, the use of adjunct faculty, and the appropriateness for these programs should be carefully reviewed.

- Providing courses and sections of courses for transfer students is acknowledged as a problem. More thought needs to be given to the number of transfers accepted and the areas that they are being attracted to. We were told that large majors like psychology and biology are not accepting transfer students. The strategic enrollment plan calls for a decrease in the number of transfer students. In addition, the State of New Jersey has recently imposed a mandate that community college graduates accepted to four year institutions be able to complete the bachelors degree with no more than sixty-four additional credits (unless they are missing pre-requisites), which limits the institution's capacity to address any additional needs of transfer students.

- The Center of Academic Achievement and First-Year Experience is exploring ways to respond to the special needs of transfer students. The underperformance of community college transfer students, particularly when they first transfer is well documented. Many of these students do go on to do well later in their career at the four-year institution. As part of an assessment of the transfer programs, a longitudinal study of these students should be carried out.

Recommendation:

The change from three to four credit-hour courses was intended to be a curricular enhancement for students and a way to provide faculty with flexible time for research and other academic activities. Faculty members are required to report how they use this "flex time." At the same time, however, what students do with this added instructional time is not well regulated and there are wide variations across the College. This raises questions of curricular integrity and accountability.

- The College must develop policies and procedures to assure that the experiential component of all courses is being delivered as intended.

Standard 12: General Education

Ramapo College requires that 40 of the 128 credits required for the Baccalaureate degree (10 out of 32 courses) be completed in General Education. The requirements cover skills, knowledge, and methods of inquiry that fit within current accepted practices in liberal learning. Requirements appear sufficient to assure that students meet the General Education competencies specified by Standard 12. General Education also appears to be well integrated in the requirements of schools and majors. Four-year plans exist that guide students through their major programs of study with explicit integration of General Education requirements. General Education courses, structured and sequenced through the students' initial two or three years, provide a base of skills, knowledge, and abilities upon which major fields of study then build. General Education proficiencies seem to represent goals for student learning whose pursuit and eventual achievement are shared by General Education and majors.

General Education programs are also expected to incorporate values, ethics and diverse perspectives. The Ramapo mission, built upon the four pillars, emphasizes concepts of intercultural and experiential learning that capture the spirit of this expectation. The General Education program is designed to ensure the consideration of diversity through its international and intercultural requirements. While student learning outcomes for General Education continue to specify aesthetic analysis and moral and ethical reasoning, recent curricular changes have reduced, or perhaps eliminated, this component from the General Education program.

Resources provided to students through the four phases of Ramapo's First-Year Experience would seem to be sufficient for understanding the intent and specifics of the General Education program, although the Self Study's recommendation to expand the program's web presence is welcome and should be implemented. Students report that understanding of the liberal arts mission, General Education program, and the four pillars is gained incrementally through orientation, the first year seminar, and their continuing experiences across the curriculum and co-curriculum.

The Standard's fundamental elements also require the assessment of General Education outcomes with results being used for curricular and programmatic improvement. Recent attempts have been made, and a Faculty Assembly Committee recently formed, to plan and coordinate General Education assessment and to provide a means for assessment data to inform the curricular development process. While the College is perhaps moving in the right direction,

change has been slow and the infrastructure to support these efforts is tenuous and untested. Without proper assessment by the faculty of the essential learning that defines the institutional identity of Ramapo (i.e., the liberal arts), ongoing review and program improvement is hampered. Furthermore, the retrofitting of a new General Education program to map many of the old (pre-2006) General Education requirements, as part of the Curriculum Enhancement Program (when General Education requirements were reduced from 17 to 10 courses), has led to a program that may or may not fit with current and future needs of the undergraduate curriculum, especially in light of the mission mentioned earlier in this report.

Significant accomplishments, progress, and exemplary/innovative practices:

- The liberal arts, embodied in part by the four pillars, have historically provided a foundation for Ramapo's undergraduate curriculum. The four pillars continue to provide a recognizable and meaningful framework for a Ramapo education; they should continue to be reassessed for currency and relevance as societal and institutional conditions shift.
- The General Education curriculum is developmentally structured and provides a foundation for more focused study within schools and majors. This "vertical" design reflects good practice in liberal education; it should also be continually reassessed to ensure that it contributes to connected and effective student learning. In this regard, evaluation should focus on what has been lost with changes to capstone experiences and subsequent compromises in the curriculum necessitated by the Curriculum Enhancement Plan.

Non-binding findings for improvement:

- While many iterations of General Education student learning goals and objectives have been proposed in recent years, a concern remains as to whether students are sufficiently aware of, and faculty are sufficiently in agreement about, what learning outcomes are to be expected from General Education. While progress has been made in specifying student learning objectives related to the specific General Education competencies in this Standard, the College must reach agreement on measureable learning outcomes related to other aspects of the College's General Education program (e.g., experiential and intercultural learning, ethical and moral reasoning). This omission must be attended to immediately so that General Education assessment can begin in earnest.

- In conjunction with work on the specification and assessment of General Education outcomes, a more intensive re-examination of the General Education curriculum is warranted in light of the recent restructuring of the overall curriculum and the re-examination of the College's mission as discussed above.

Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning

The team concludes that Ramapo College meets this standard, but expresses several concerns, outlined in the following analysis and findings.

In general, student learning outcomes have been articulated across many levels and for many programs in accordance with Middle States expectations; and they are consonant with the College's mission. This is evident in the extensive survey of course syllabi undertaken in the self-study. While the evaluation and improvement of student learning through assessment is in evidence at the course level and in some, but not all, academic programs and units, program level assessment processes are uneven in quality and completeness across programs and units. There are examples of assessment having been conducted in a sustained and systematic way in some programs and evidence thus gained having been used for program and/or curricular improvement. Many of these examples come from units in which disciplinary accreditation often drives stronger assessment practices (e.g., business and social work). However, the assessment process is not systematic or well integrated into continuous improvement cycles for the majority of programs, including General Education.

Despite some reports in the self-study of program and curricular changes driven by assessment, the team found inconsistent evidence that such changes came from assessment practices that meet the guidelines of Middle States Standard 14. Program-level and institutional assessment of learning, including the assessment of General Education, is not yet sufficiently well developed to demonstrate either evidence of achievement or its use in improving teaching and learning at these levels. The team's examination of Program Reviews and Assessment Plans indicates that many programs remain at early stages in developing assessment strategies. In some programs, for example, syllabus review, statements of program philosophy, and enumeration of course-level goals and outcomes stand in for true assessment plans. Other assessment reports described proposed methods but did not supply data, used questionable data sources (e.g., course grades, audience growth, student evaluations), or apparently misinterpreted data. Plans or activities occasionally showed promise of "good practice," but this seemed more the exception than the rule. However, at some levels and for some programs, assessment evidence has been used for curricular and pedagogical improvements.

The use of institutional-level data (e.g., NSSE, CLA) to inform the assessment of student learning was notably absent. Despite the institutional effort and expense of undertaking the College Learning Assessment in 2008-2009—efforts applauded by the team—an inadequate senior sample severely restricted the validity, and hence the value, of the CLA data and report.

While there were some reports of a culture of assessment on campus, evidence was spotty; such a culture is at best in the early stages of development. There is some evidence of faculty ownership of, and investment in assessment at the most local levels (course and convener group) and the earliest stages (work on outcome specification), which is a necessary foundation for building a culture of assessment. For instance, courses/syllabi reflect student learning outcomes (SLOs) and seem well tied to overall mission of the program/school/College. In 2010, however, at this point in the history of assessment in higher education, much greater expectations for the development of systematic processes for the assessment of student learning are present for Middle States institutions. The team notes that after Ramapo's last self-study, in 2000, the Commission requested documentation of "further progress in the development and implementation of a comprehensive outcomes assessment plan."

Non-binding findings for improvement:

- We endorse the recommendations made in the Self-Study to systematize the process of assessment and the collection and display of assessment data and results through comprehensive planning, WEAVE online, and web site development.

Recommendations:

- We have already commented on the unevenness of assessment practices across programs: too many remain in the early or middle stages of the assessment cycle. The College must attend immediately to developing and implementing a documented, organized, and sustained assessment process for all academic programs that is characterized by the following: 1) Clearly articulated statements of expected student learning outcomes; and 2) the systematic, sustained, and thorough use of multiple qualitative and/or quantitative measures that maximize the use of existing data and information, clearly and purposely relate to the goals they are assessing, are of sufficient quality that results can be used with confidence to inform decisions, and include direct evidence of student learning.

- Additionally, we believe that far too much time has passed with only marginal progress having been made on the assessment of General Education student learning objectives. The College must institute a planned and sustainable process for Gen Ed assessment to evaluate and improve student learning. Such a process must receive the support and collaboration of faculty and administration and yield results that provide evidence of key institutional and program learning outcomes. Such evidence needs demonstrably to form the basis for curricular and program improvement.

Chapter 7: Related Educational Activities

Standard 13: Related Educational Activities

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings:

Although it does not have branch campuses or offer courses in other locations (other than clinical nursing courses in partner hospitals), Ramapo College has in place a variety of programs and services that are encompassed in this category and that are appropriate to its mission. Overall, the College's related educational activities are overseen by specific institutional structures that assure that faculty members regularly have the opportunity to provide input and feedback.

The College has systematic procedures in place for identifying under-prepared students (e.g., through ACCUPLACER, entering test scores/transcript evaluations) and for assuring they are appropriately placed into developmental and basic skills courses. There is a comprehensive approach to tutoring under-prepared students, with services provided through the Educational Opportunity Fund, Athletics, and the Office of Specialized Services. Procedures for faculty identification of under-prepared students (or processes for student self-identification) are not explicit, however.

Ramapo College has appropriate policies and procedures in place to assure the integrity and quality of programs being offered in conjunction with outside providers. On campus, the Center for Innovative and Professional Learning develops both credit and non-credit program proposals for various audiences using a collaborative process that involves extensive input from the academic division.

In the area of distance learning, the College has provided the training necessary to assure that faculty members are prepared to offer such courses, and has built an adequate infrastructure to support that program. Moreover, the College has provided monetary incentives to encourage faculty members to teach online and modify their face-to-face courses for online delivery.

Ramapo's Study Abroad program is consistent with the institution's mission and is integrated into its overall curriculum. During the 2005-06 academic year, the College declared a moratorium on the program and commissioned an external report. This may have affected current enrollments. From 2003-04 to 2007-08, student participation in Study Abroad programs declined steadily, from 221 students to 111; this 2007-08 figure represents a lower level of participation that was found before the College's moratorium on Study Abroad in 2005-06. This may be problematic, given the importance of international education as one of the pillars of a Ramapo education.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices:

- The College offers a six-week Pre-Freshman Summer Studies Program to under-prepared students through its Center for Academic Success and Educational Opportunity Fund.

Non-binding finding for improvement:

- The institution should develop new and more effective strategies for increasing Study Abroad participation, especially given the centrality of this activity to Ramapo's mission.

IV. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONTINUING COMPLIANCE

Standard 4: Leadership and Governance

- Establish a college-wide forum as part of shared governance system in which all constituencies can sit down, share information, and have substantive discussion. Work toward shared all-campus governance where all constituencies can come together.
- Provide greater faculty voice on committees such as the Institutional Effectiveness Committee, Position Review Committee, and the Budget Committee, and reexamine other important task forces to ensure adequate faculty representation.

Standard 8: Student Admissions and Financial Aid

- Evaluate the potentially incompatible goals of the enrollment management plan and determine which goals should take priority.

Standard 11: Educational Offerings

- The change from three to four credit-hour courses was intended to be a curricular enhancement for students and a way to provide faculty with flexible time for research and other academic activities. Faculty members are required to report how they use this "flex time." At the same time, however, what students do with this added instructional time is not well regulated and there are wide variations across the College. This raises questions of curricular integrity and accountability. The College must develop policies and procedures to assure that the experiential component of all courses is being delivered as intended.

Related Recommendations under Standards 2 (Planning), 7 (Institutional Assessment), and 14 (Assessment)

- Fully integrate planning processes at the College level with the assessment of student learning outcomes in academic affairs.

- Identify, establish and monitor on a regular basis performance indicators that are linked to its strategic goals and objectives.

- Attend immediately to developing and implementing a documented, organized, and sustained assessment process for all academic programs that is characterized by the following: 1) Clearly articulated statements of expected student learning outcomes; and 2) the systematic, sustained, and thorough use of multiple qualitative and/or quantitative measures that maximize the use of existing data and information, clearly and purposely relate to the goals they are assessing, are of sufficient quality that results can be used with confidence to inform decisions, and include direct evidence of student learning.

- Fully institute a planned and sustainable process for Gen Ed assessment to evaluate and improve student learning. Such a process must receive the support and collaboration of faculty and administration and yield results that provide evidence of key institutional and program learning outcomes. Such evidence needs demonstrably to form the basis for curricular and program improvement.