CHAPTER 4

STUDENTS
STANDARDS 8, 9 AND 6
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STANDARDS 8, 9 AND 6

GOAL 3: ENRICHING COLLEGE LIFE AND COMMUNITY PRESENCE
(Ramapo College Strategic Plan, p. 10)

Academic life must be complemented by a vibrant campus life that provides students, faculty, staff, alumni, their families, members of the surrounding communities, and prospective students the opportunity to realize their full potential. Stronger relations within the College community, among the College and local, regional and statewide communities, and between the College and alumni will be actively pursued.

- Objective 1.5: The College will increase access and support for underrepresented students.
- Objective 3.1: The College will provide a wide range of activities and programs to meet the needs of resident and commuting students and to engage community members.
- Objective 3.3: The College will seek improvement to the transportation links to the surrounding community and to other transportation hubs.
- Objective 3.5: The College will promote campus safety and security and lifestyle practices that focus on safety, health, and avoiding the abuse and illicit use of alcohol and other drugs.
- Objective 3.7: The College will foster a hospitable and equitable environment for students, faculty, and staff.

STANDARD 8: STUDENT ADMISSIONS AND RETENTION

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

STANDARD 9: STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

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

STANDARD 6: INTEGRITY

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

This chapter demonstrates how Ramapo College meets Standards 6, 8, and 9 through its programs and services for students. It reviews the student experience on a continuum, from the admissions process through alumni involvement. The chapter addresses these standards together because they are very much interconnected in the student experience. The college’s ability to recruit, retain, and graduate students depends largely on its ability to deliver programs and services that support student learning and engagement. Similarly, student success is dependent upon the integrity of policies, procedures, programs, and services. The study group’s review of reports, existing data, performance reviews and interviews with colleagues and students revealed a common theme: a focus on student development and student learning, with an appreciation for diversity.

STUDENT PROFILE

In fall 2008, student enrollment was 5,847. Most undergraduate students were between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five (83.9%) and came from New Jersey (92.7%). Undergraduate students made up 95% of the student population and included 880 first-time freshmen and 621 transfers. Student ethnicity was 79.6% Caucasian, 8.6% Hispanic, 6.3% Black, and 5% Asian-Pacific Islander. In the same period, graduate students made up the remaining 5% of the population. A majority of these students were Caucasian females over the age of thirty. (See 2008 Institutional Profile, available in the Resource Room, for specific demographics.) While overall student enrollment has increased more than 12% since 2000, there has been very little change to the ethnic composition of the student body.

A majority of first-time freshmen (75.8%) indicated that Ramapo College was their first choice and often cited good academic reputation, college size, low tuition, and social reputation as primary reasons for choosing the college. (2008 Institutional Profile and Cooperative Institutional Research Program [CIRP] survey available in the Resource Room.)

ACADEMIC PROFILE

In fall 2008, undergraduate offerings included thirty-five majors, twenty-nine minors, and six certificate programs; graduate offerings consisted of three master’s degree programs. Students may also obtain certification in elementary or secondary education as part of their undergraduate degree or post-baccalaureate. The five majors with the highest enrollment were business administration (14.2%), psychology (11.4%), nursing (8%), communication arts (7.6%), and biology (6.9%). Almost half of graduate students (49.3%) were enrolled in the educational technology program, followed by nursing (13.6%), liberal studies (13.3%), and business administration (2.4%). (Admission to the MBA program was suspended in June 2004.) The remaining students (21.3%) were non-degree seeking (2008 Institutional Profile).

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

The four major divisions of the college—Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Administration and Finance, and Institutional Advancement—provide programs and services designed to meet the aforementioned standards and the college’s strategic goals of enhancing academic excellence, investing in the future, and enriching college life and community presence. (A chart listing the major student services is in the Appendix.) Some divisions have undergone significant reorganization over the past five years with the goals of linking related student services; strengthening the connection between budget, planning, and institutional effectiveness; and reinforcing student learning.

CAMPUS CLIMATE (Integrity)

Campus life is vibrant, and opportunities for student learning and engagement are plentiful and diverse. Students participate in seventy-one clubs, twenty-two fraternities and sororities, and twenty-two intercollegiate athletic teams. Students attend lectures and discussions, performances, productions and trips; engage in service learning, study abroad, cooperative education, and experiential learning; compete in intercollegiate or intramural sports;
perform in musical and theater productions; and serve on all-college committees, judicial boards, and search committees. The college offers many opportunities for students to serve as peer facilitators, tutors, advisors, and mentors in order to educate, support, and assist one another. The goal is to produce active, responsible, and engaged citizens who contribute to the vibrancy of college and community life.

Current students, alumni, and other visitors often remark on the friendly atmosphere on campus, and in 2008, the New Jersey Psychological Association awarded the college the Psychologically Healthy Workplace Award. The relatively small size of the campus, accessibility of the faculty and staff, and partnerships between units and divisions foster collaboration and communication. The faculty and staff view student learning and success as a priority. They actively engage students, attend campus and student-sponsored events, and serve as club/organization advisors and mentors.

The college has been a pioneer in environmentally green practices, and sustainability is a guiding principle in the strategic plan. In November 2007, at the urging of the Environmental Alliance Club, the president signed the American College & University Presidents’ Climate Commitment, which commits the college to climate neutrality with specific annual benchmarks. The president appointed a Climate Commitment Task Force and charged it with leading the college in carrying out these objectives. In addition to supporting ongoing efforts related to energy savings, recycling, and paperless practices, the task force partnered with students in a senior level environmental course to conduct an inventory of greenhouse gas emissions. The task force also initiated the development of an ENERGY STAR policy for purchasing and a policy for new buildings and renovations to achieve Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System silver standards or better. Students played an active role in these endeavors, including forming the organization 1STEP (Students Together for Environmental Progress), which works to make “positive, measurable changes on campus by promoting a sustainable environment” (1STEP Web site).

The college was also a pioneer in providing a barrier-free learning and living environment and continues to lead the way in accessibility and support for students with disabilities. The Office of Specialized Services facilitates mandated equal access and provides eligible undergraduate students with federally funded academic support services beyond those in place for all students. In 2007-08, 273 students (4.6%) with documented disabilities, including non-matriculated students, sought services through the Office of Specialized Services.

Achieving and celebrating diversity within the student body, faculty, and staff are major goals of the college. The college demonstrates this commitment through its mission and goals, the efforts of the Diversity Action Committee (discussed more fully later in this chapter), and the wide variety of campus services and activities that promote a welcome and supportive environment for all. The vitality of the Women’s Center, the existence of a Queer Peer Services coordinator, and organizations such as the Black Student Union, Filipino American Student Association, Association of Latinos Moving Ahead, and International Students Organization, reflect the college’s commitment to create and nurture diversity on campus.

**STRATEGIC ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT**

New Jersey exports more students to colleges in other states than any other state. In fact, according to the U.S. Department of Education, in fall 2006, the state exported 34,494 students to other states while importing only 4,395. New Jersey’s senior public colleges were first organized as comprehensive institutions during the late 1960s. Prior to that, the main mission of the six senior public colleges was to educate prospective teachers. As a result, students interested in a wider range of programs migrated to private colleges within the state and, in increasing numbers, to colleges outside the state. This pattern did not change when the public colleges, which now included Ramapo and Stockton Colleges, began to offer a wider range of majors. A history of students leaving the state, a persistent feeling among young people that “going away to college” could not be accomplished in so small a state; and the lack of a storied history for the public higher education system contributed to the lack of interest in public higher education among New Jersey’s high school students.
For decades, the public colleges in New Jersey worked hard to undo years of public misinformation. The colleges vastly expanded their academic offerings, added significant residential capacity, hired outstanding faculty, and embarked on a campaign to reintroduce the colleges to the citizens of the state (and elsewhere). Still, many people perceived Ramapo College as a two-year college or did not know it existed. Rankings and listings in various publications increased visibility of New Jersey’s public colleges and created renewed interest among state residents. U.S. News & World Report recently ranked Ramapo College and three other New Jersey schools among the top five public colleges in the Master’s Universities-North category.

By 2000, the college had developed a plan, called Enrollment by Design, which attempted to project enrollment for the next fifteen years based on the realities of the institution and the prospective student population. In 2007, the associate vice president for enrollment management created a Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) team. The team’s purpose was to make enrollment planning an institutional priority with broad participation and a focus on attracting quality students in a competitive environment. The team developed and managed a Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) Plan (approved in December 2008) and made recommendations regarding planning, recruitment, marketing, retention, and scholarships. (SEM Plan, structure and composition available in the Resource Room.) This group met monthly to discuss risk and reward opportunities, review campus events and concerns, and discuss general enrollment and campus-wide issues. Additionally, the college established three campus-wide subcommittees to concentrate on critical areas of enrollment. These subcommittees are the Planning Committee, the Marketing Committee, and the Scholarship Committee. The three major goals identified through the plan were 1) improving the academic profile of the freshman class; 2) improving retention and graduation rates; and 3) increasing the ethnic/racial diversity of the student body. The Planning Committee, a smaller body of key constituents, meets biweekly to review internal data, examines market trends, and makes adjustments to the plan. This committee is charged with developing, maintaining, and championing the Strategic Enrollment Management Plan.

RECRUITMENT

After an analysis of the external environmental factors that will impact the college’s enrollment over the next five years, the Strategic Enrollment Management Planning Committee identified targeted populations where Ramapo must enhance its presence and recruitment efforts. According to the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education, the number of New Jersey high school graduates peaked in 2008 and will decrease approximately 4% between 2008 and 2013. Additionally, the numbers of high school graduates in the surrounding states (New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Connecticut) are also projected to decline, which will create a more competitive environment for recruitment. The team identified out-of-state and international students as critical to recruitment efforts for the college to remain competitive. Essentially bordering New York State, Ramapo has a unique opportunity to recruit out-of-state students, particularly from Rockland County. The Office of Admissions has assigned this area to a specific recruiter for further development. Additionally, each admissions recruiter has been assigned an “emerging market” territory in other out-of-state areas to explore the college’s viability in other markets.

As a result of these activities, the college’s first-time freshman applications, admissions, and enrollment increased significantly (see Figure 1). Further, with the recent reorganization of the Roukema Center for International Education, the college expects that international student recruitment and service will be enhanced. Lastly, in anticipation of the demographic changes, Ramapo has begun to look beyond the traditional-age student to meet future enrollment goals. To this end, in 2008, an associate director for adult learning and graduate admissions was added to the enrollment management staff. The Strategic Enrollment Management Planning Committee began to further explore both of these populations—adult learners and graduate students—in 2009.
FIGURE 1
FIRST-TIME FRESHMAN APPLICATIONS, ADMISSIONS, AND ENROLLMENT

2000-2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 2000</th>
<th>Fall 2002</th>
<th>Fall 2004</th>
<th>Fall 2006</th>
<th>Fall 2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Applications</td>
<td>3,145</td>
<td>3,785</td>
<td>4,669</td>
<td>4,430</td>
<td>5,556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offers</td>
<td>1,496</td>
<td>1,633</td>
<td>1,888</td>
<td>2,048</td>
<td>2,550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance Ratio</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
<td>43.1%</td>
<td>40.4%</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
<td>45.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>687</td>
<td>755</td>
<td>814</td>
<td>880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment Yield</td>
<td>43.0%</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>39.7%</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Institutional Profile

All admissions policies, standards, and criteria are implemented to reflect the major goals of the college’s strategic plan. As part of the 2008 Strategic Enrollment Management Plan, the college identified three major admissions goals: 1) to stabilize first-time enrollment at 900 students annually; 2) to raise the level of academic preparedness of the entering class; and 3) to increase student diversity as defined by the strategic plan. The overall enrollment goal was exceeded in 2008, although the number of first-time, full-time students was slightly below nine hundred. The overall enrollment and the first-time and transfer goals were all met or exceeded in 2009.

Academic quality has also improved (see Figure 2). In 2000, the academic profile of a first-time, full-time student was a ranking in the seventy-third percentile of his/her graduating class with a 540 verbal SAT and a 550 math, for a combined score of 1090. In 2008, the profile was a student in the seventy-eighth percentile of his/her graduating class, an increase of 5%, with a 565 critical reading SAT and a 585 math, for a combined score of 1150, a 60 point increase. The fall 2009 statistics, although not yet finalized at the time of this writing, indicate a further increase in all areas.

FIGURE 2
MEAN ACADEMIC PREPAREDNESS OF REGULARLY ADMITTED

First-Time Full-Time Students

2000-2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 2000</th>
<th>Fall 2002</th>
<th>Fall 2004</th>
<th>Fall 2006</th>
<th>Fall 2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Rank</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT-Verbal</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>565</td>
<td>577</td>
<td>581</td>
<td>565</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT-Math</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>587</td>
<td>595</td>
<td>585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined SAT</td>
<td>1,090</td>
<td>1,135</td>
<td>1,164</td>
<td>1,176</td>
<td>1,150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Institutional Profile
To meet the aforementioned student profile goals, the college offers merit-based academic scholarships to high-achieving prospective students. Students are evaluated based on their high school grade point average, class rank, and standardized test scores. The college advertises available merit scholarships and eligibility criteria on the Admissions Web site, in the Admissions View Book, during Open House and Immediate Decision Day programs, and through the Office of Financial Aid. Students who are offered Presidential or Provost Scholarships receive a phone call from the president and are invited to a reception held at his residence. Presidential and Provost Scholarship students who choose to live on campus are placed in housing with their peers.

As suggested in both its mission and the enrollment goals, the college attempts to integrate international education through its curriculum, co-curriculum, and campus community. In 2007-08, 163 international students from fifty-three countries were enrolled at the college. The college also strives to increase its ethnic minority population by offering a series of on-site admissions programs in urban areas throughout the state. It supports visits from urban high school students to the campus and works with outside support programs, such as Operation Link Up, which serves high school students in local cities (e.g., Paterson and Newark). Despite these efforts, the college’s ethnic diversity profile is not as strong as desired. Between 2000 and 2009, the percentage of students from minority groups has remained virtually unchanged.

For 2009-10, the Strategic Enrollment Management Planning Committee is developing a comprehensive diversity recruitment plan to increase the ethnic diversity of the college. The group is setting specific goals and targets to monitor and ensure results. The college recognizes that a number of factors make it difficult to attract minority groups, including a paucity of public transportation, a lack of some high-interest majors and the lack of diversity (people and services) in the immediate community. Despite these roadblocks, the college is committed to achieving its goal of increasing the ethnic diversity of the student body.

**CHALLENGING AND SUPPORTING STUDENTS TO ACHIEVE THEIR BEST**

The college seeks to enroll a diverse student body and to challenge students to realize their individual potential. Whether a student is high achieving and seeking a high level of academic rigor, or he/she exhibits the potential to achieve but requires additional support, the college has programs and services to meet the need. High-achieving and self-motivated students who are curious and enjoy learning as an end in itself may apply for admission to the Ramapo College Honors Program. Unlike many programs in which applicants must simply meet academic criteria and apply, the philosophy of the Honors Program is that “good academic standing is a consequence of the engaged values of a College Honors student, not the primary goal” (College Honors Program Web site). (See Chapter 6 for a fuller discussion of the College Honors Program.)

The college also participates in the New Jersey State Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) Program, which is designed to increase access for educationally and economically disadvantaged students. EOF program staff members participate in admissions events and work collaboratively with Enrollment Management to recruit qualified students into the program. Program admission is based on high school grades, class rank, standardized test scores, extracurricular activities, letters of recommendation, and financial need. The academic profile for EOF students admitted in fall 2008 was a 3.0 recalculated grade point average, a ranking within the top 20% of the graduating class, and a combined critical reading and math SAT score of 900. Students who are admitted through the program participate in a comprehensive pre-freshman summer program and benefit from an array of individualized support services, including career development, mentoring programs, developmental coursework, general tutorials, and a College Reading and Study Skills course. To further its commitment to the success of the EOF program, the college dedicated Strategic Priority Incentive Funds (discussed more fully in Chapters 2 and 3) to supplement federal funds in order to fully fund the first year for all Educational Opportunity Fund students. The hope is to increase the first-year retention rates of EOF students and limit the financial impediment to completing the first year. The EOF program also offers second-year stipends for those students who meet established criteria. The Ramapo College EOF program currently serves more than 300 students.
Additionally, the college enrolls approximately 10% of the freshman class as “special admit” students. These students do not meet the college’s regular admission standards but demonstrate the potential to be successful and make contributions to the community (determined by interviews, artistic portfolios, recommendations from guidance counselors, or recommendation and sponsorship of a college employee or unit). Student athletes who are accepted as special admits also receive additional support through the Athletics Department in the form of individual advisement and weekly study halls.

Transfer students made up 41.1% of the undergraduate student population in fall 2008. Most transfers (58%) came from New Jersey community colleges. Because transfers are a diverse group, they bring with them unique challenges and needs. The college’s General Education program creates a foundation for courses within the majors; however, some students transfer in the equivalent of these courses, allowing them to “skip” the courses that many consider to be the essence of a Ramapo College education. Ensuring that transfer students are welcomed and integrated into college programs is a continuing priority.

A plan to reduce the overall number of transfers is in place, but there is likely to be pressure from the state to admit transfers given the increasing popularity of the community colleges, the NJ STARS program, and the NJ Transfer law. NJ STARS is a scholarship program that covers the cost of up to five semesters of tuition and approved fees at New Jersey’s nineteen community colleges. It is available to New Jersey residents who graduate in the top 20% of their high school class. Students must first apply for all other federal and state financial aid available to them, and NJ STARS will cover the remaining cost of tuition and fees. If a student is not eligible for financial aid, NJ STARS will cover the entire cost. Students who choose to take advantage of this program will spend their first two years at a community college and then transfer to a four-year public college or university in New Jersey. Currently Ramapo College accepts five to seven NJ STARS students per year.

Fewer high school seniors and increased selectivity are likely to lead to increased numbers of transfer students. All of the policies and procedures used in the evaluation of transfer credits are published on the Admissions Web site. There are currently four articulation agreements in place with two-year colleges in New Jersey, and two articulation agreements with two-year colleges in New York.

The college uses the NJ Transfer statewide evaluation system to ensure that information on the transferability of credits from all New Jersey two-year institutions is readily available to prospective students. Curriculum and data changes (course identifications, credit changes, etc.) that have occurred over the last several years have compromised the ability of the college to maintain complete accuracy on the NJ Transfer Web site. A task force from the Office of Admissions and the Center for Academic Advisement and the First-Year Experience will be established to assess and correct any inaccuracies by the end of 2010. In addition, the college should further develop and assess desired outcomes and goals for transfers, separate from the general student population, given the significance of this population and the unique challenges that transfers face.

MEETING FINANCIAL NEEDS AND KEEPING COLLEGE AFFORDABLE

The Financial Aid Office administers granting programs awarded to students based on need, as prescribed by the Free Application for Federal Student Assistance (FAFSA). This office administers federal, state, and institutionally funded merit-based scholarships. In addition, the office works with the Ramapo College Foundation and various outside agencies to administer private scholarships and federal, state, and private loan programs. Over 70% of Ramapo College students relied on some form of outside funding in 2007-08. The total amount of money distributed, including loans, was $42.6 million. Over the past five years, there has been an increase in both Pell grants (13.2%) and Targeted Assistance Grants (44.4%). The most significant increase in aid, however, has come from loans: Parent Loans for Dependent Students increased 116%, New Jersey Class Loans increased 90.7%, and private loans increased 353.3%.

Students with identified financial need may also participate in Federal Work Study, which allows them to earn money for working on and off campus. Additionally, 10% to 15% percent of the incoming freshman class each year earns academic scholarships based on outstanding achievement in high school (2008 Institutional Profile).
TRANSITIONS: HELPING STUDENTS ACCLIMATE AND ADJUST

The college views the transition and adjustment of new students as a phased process that includes orientation, advisement, and registration, first-year student assembly, personal development workshops, and the first-year seminar. Aside from the First-Year Seminar, these programs and services are coordinated by the Center for Academic Advisement and the First-Year Experience (CAAFYE).

PHASE 1

Students participating in the first phase of orientation receive information in their acceptance packets regarding placement-testing requirements in reading, writing, and/or mathematics. Based on those results and the intended major, academic advisors pre-package first-year students into beginning level coursework. At orientation, each student receives assistance in registering for a First-Year Seminar and making any other necessary schedule changes. Students can also attend peer-led workshops; sign up for access to the college’s various computer networks, and go on a campus tour.

Transfer students also attend an orientation and advisement session. Upon acceptance to the college, they receive a course equivalency report that outlines what courses have been accepted from their prior institution and how these apply to Ramapo College requirements. At that time, they also receive information regarding special requirements they must meet, such as placement testing in reading, writing, and/or mathematics. Based on the results of the assessment and the student’s declared major, professional and faculty advisors guide students in selecting and registering for the appropriate courses.

International students and students affiliated with the Educational Opportunity Fund Program, Athletics, or the Office of Specialized Services have access to additional advisement and support during their transition and throughout their academic careers. The college recognizes that these students may have challenges or needs that require specialized support.

PHASE 2

The second phase of the orientation process takes place when first-year students arrive at the college. First-year residents check into their residence halls prior to upper-class students. This gives them an opportunity to settle in and participate in programs and activities that are specifically designed to help them acclimate to the environment, meet their peers, and learn what the college expects of them. Highlights of the program are the First-Year Student Assembly and Arching Ceremony. The Arching Ceremony is a Ramapo tradition during which first-year students move in procession from the Assembly in the Bradley Center to the Arch, a major symbol and college landmark located in the center of campus. Their family members line the processional path and applaud them as they pass through. The president greets them at the Arch, where he shakes each student’s hand and welcomes him/her to the college. This procession foreshadows the future trip each student will make through the Arch as part of commencement exercises, going in the opposite direction and cheered on by faculty and staff.

PHASE 3

The First-Year Seminar (FYS) is a required course in the General Education curriculum that serves as the introduction to general education and liberal learning. It enhances the students’ orientation to the rigors of college-level work. First-Year Seminar develops students’ critical-thinking skills using open discussion, reading, writing, and experiential learning. Full-time faculty and staff primarily teach the course, usually accompanied by a trained peer facilitator. The peer facilitator offers a student perspective and provides advice and support to aid new students in making the transition to college. As part of this course, students participate in a common reading, which links them to one another and the institution. (The rest of the college is also encouraged to read and discuss the selection). In recent years, the author of the assigned book has been the speaker at Convocation, an annual event that serves as the official beginning of the academic year. Recent examples are Reading Lolita in Tehran by Azar Nafisi, Fast Food Nation by Eric Schlosser, The Canon: A Whirligig Tour of the Beautiful Basics of Science by Natalie Angier and The Last Lecture by Randy Pausch and Jeffrey Zaslow.
First-time full-time students receive academic advisement from professional staff in the Center for Academic Advisement and the First-Year Experience as well as from their First-Year Seminar instructor and peer facilitator. In their sophomore year, students may be assigned an advisor in the center. If they have declared a major, they may be assigned a faculty member in their discipline. By junior year, all students receive academic advisement from faculty members who teach in their major. They may also seek assistance from the staff in the center.

The center conducts formal assessment of student satisfaction with the orientation process and follows up with further assessment at the end of the first semester to measure student satisfaction and academic and social adjustment. The results of these assessments indicate that students are “generally satisfied” with their orientation experience, as well as with their first-semester experience. CAAFYE also tracks student satisfaction with academic advisement. Based on results from the spring 2008 National Survey on Student Engagement (NSSE), first-year students evaluated the advisement they received as good (average response of 2.94, with 2 representing fair and 3 representing good). Seniors, using the same scale, evaluated the quality of advisement as 2.68. The data prompted a survey of all first-year students, continuing students, and faculty to determine the effectiveness of the current academic advisement model and identify opportunities for improvement. The results are being analyzed and are expected to help inform the development of a five-year academic advising plan.

**ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES**

**STUDENT RECORDS (Integrity)**

Maintenance of student records has become increasingly Web-based, allowing students, faculty, and staff greater access to student information, transcripts, course registration information, policies, and procedures. With greater access to such data, students can play a more active role in their progression toward graduation. Students can use the self-help features in the online system to check bills, verify transfer credits, check grade point averages, and monitor progress against program requirements.

The Registrar’s Office provides information on academic policies, procedures, and calendars, and posts the semester class schedules online for undergraduate and graduate programs. This office maintains students’ academic records. To protect the rights of students regarding these records, the college has policies and guidelines that describe the records maintained and the provisions for releasing information, student inspection review, and record changes. All transcript, grade collection, and distribution records are maintained in accordance with legislation and established policies. Grade adjustments, program changes, course withdrawals, enrollment verifications, and transcript processing are among the services provided. Responsible offices follow the applicable government policies and guidelines (GLBA, FERPA, and HIPAA).

**TUTORING**

Students are offered a wide range of tutoring services and classroom support from pre-college to the graduate level. In the Center for Academic Success, professional tutors and peer tutors provide one-on-one instruction on specific topics. Peer tutors participate in a four-day training class prior to the fall semester and are required to attend faculty/staff presentations on pedagogy and demonstrate mastery in their areas. In fall 2008, the center documented 1,784 tutorial visits, which represents more than a 10% increase over the prior four years. The center’s self-evaluations and reports of its tutoring services suggest a measurable positive impact on student grades. A 2007 Writing Center report reveals that 74.7% of the students who used these services received a B- or higher in the related course (2008 Center for Academic Success data, available in the Resource Room).
RETENTION AND GRADUATION

The college has experienced significant improvement in retention over the past decade. Current first-year-to-second-year retention rates are particularly impressive, with 87.9% first-time full-time students returning for a second year (see Figure 3). Second-year and third-year retention rates are also very good, at 82.3% and 74.7% respectively (see Figures 4 and 5).

FIGURE 3

![First-Year Retention Rate](image)

FIGURE 4

![Second-Year Retention Rate](image)
FIGURE 5

3rd-Year Retention Rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall of Entry</th>
<th>Full-Time, First-Time</th>
<th>Full-Time Transfer</th>
<th>Part-Time Transfer</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>74.9%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>50.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>77.5%</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>54.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>76.7%</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
<td>54.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>74.7%</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>52.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2008 Institutional Profile

The improvement in graduation rates is equally impressive. Full-time students who began their studies in fall 1998 had a four-year graduation rate of 36% and a six-year rate of 62.3%. By comparison, students who began in fall 2002 had a four-year graduation rate of 48.2%, a five-year rate of 67.1% and a six-year rate of 69.7%. By 2004, the four-year graduation rate for full-time, first-time students rose to 64.4% (see Figures 6, 7, 8).

FIGURE 6

Four-Year Cumulative Graduation Rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Full-Time, First-Time</th>
<th>Full-Time Transfer</th>
<th>Part-Time Transfer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>48.2%</td>
<td>62.8%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>59.0%</td>
<td>70.1%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>64.4%</td>
<td>71.6%</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students with disabilities have found similar success at the college. First-year-to-second-year retention for students affiliated with the Office of Specialized Services who began in fall 2007 was 87.5%, which is comparable to the overall retention rate for the college. The U.S. Department of Education (2000) reports that nationwide, 53% of students with disabilities graduate within five years versus 64% of their non-disabled peers. At Ramapo, 47% of students affiliated with the office beginning in fall 2002 graduated in four years, 58% in five years, and 59% after six years. (2008 Institutional Profile)
ENGAGING STUDENTS AND PROMOTING LEARNING

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (*Integrity*)

In 2004, Interim President Pfeiffer established the Diversity Action Committee, consisting of faculty, staff, and students, to explore the college’s accomplishments and challenges related to diversity. The committee was created to support, promote, and celebrate students, faculty, and staff of diverse ages, genders, religions, sexual orientations, ethnicities, disabilities, and economic backgrounds.

In spring 2005, the Diversity Action Committee conducted a Campus Climate Survey, developed by Rankin & Associates, to all faculty, staff, and students to assess current strengths and weaknesses and develop an action plan. The findings of the survey (available in the Resource Room) indicate that the college strives to create a diverse and equitable environment; however, there are still members of the community who do not feel sufficiently heard or welcome. While such challenges are not uncommon in higher education institutions across the country, the college has taken affirmative steps to improve the campus climate. One major step was to hire a part-time ombudsperson to serve as a neutral, independent and confidential party who can assist faculty, staff, and students in resolving disputes. In addition, the Diversity Action Committee established the annual Diversity Convocation and secured an increase in funding for the Schomburg Distinguished Visiting Scholar Program, which brings to the campus speakers and events that relate to the experiences of minorities. In addition, the Diversity Action Committee sponsors or co-sponsors guest speakers/lecturers and the Dangerous Discussions workshop series, which have included the topics of race, disability as a social construct, and social class. The college’s commitment to diversity and inclusion is also illustrated through services and activities offered by the Women’s Center, Specialized Services, International Student Services, Queer Peer Services and the Minority Faculty and Staff Association, among others.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

As indicated in the college’s mission and strategic plan, development of the “whole” student is critical to student learning, engagement, and success. The college believes that through participation in a broad range of purposeful programs and services—including clubs, organizations, leadership positions, and other opportunities—students will learn to think critically, value diversity, and make positive contributions to college and community life.

Student involvement in out-of-class activities is significant. Of the 449 usable responses (33%) to the 2008 Graduating Senior/Recent Alumni Survey, 67.1% of respondents indicated that they had attended one or more multicultural events and 65.8% reported attending one or more international events. More than 50% of respondents reported having been involved in a volunteer/service learning project, residence hall activity, multicultural event, study abroad, or internship. More than one-third (38.3%) were inducted into a national honor society, 31.8% attended an academic conference, 28.9% worked with a faculty member on a research project, and 23.4% completed a co-op. Also notable, students serve on college-wide committees, search committees, and judicial boards, and they sit on the college’s Board of Trustees.

Student involvement in clubs, organizations, and intercollegiate sports is likewise significant. The college has seventy-one clubs and twenty-two fraternities and sororities that reflect varied ethnicities, religions/spiritual beliefs, political views, areas of interest, and opportunities for community service and elected office. (The list is available on the visiting team Web site.) Students develop skills in leadership, budgeting, publicity and promotion, planning, contract negotiation, and conflict and crisis management. Students are also involved in campus life through their participation in college-sponsored programs and events.

In recent years, students have expressed interest in hosting major speakers and performers and in participating in traditions that can carry from year to year. In response, the **Office of Student Development** hosts two major concerts/performances each year and throughout the year sponsors renowned speakers, authors, and performers who often draw sold-out or near-capacity attendance. Additionally, funding and staff support are provided for student-initiated large-scale programs, such as the Student Government Association’s “Octoberfest,” which began in 2007 and has become an annual tradition. Students also played a more active role in celebrating Founders Day,
an annual recognition of the college’s “birthday.” What was once a celebration mostly for faculty and staff, and particularly the founders of the college, now includes significant involvement of students. Students also continue to serve as advocates for social justice and change, evidenced by organizations such as Save Darfur, Ramapo Pride, and Colleges Against Cancer, as well as the Student Government Association’s active involvement in educating the community regarding higher education funding.

The college recognizes that significant learning occurs outside the classroom. Increasingly, co-curricular programs have intentional learning components and a focus on outcomes. Many programs have specific learning outcomes and participants are asked to complete surveys that include questions about outcomes. Furthermore, faculty members are encouraged to sponsor out-of-classroom programs and events that link the curricular to the co-curricular, facilitate student learning, and provide informal opportunities for them to serve as mentors. To that end, in 2004, the Office of Student Development established a faculty grant program, the Platinum series, which supports faculty-initiated activities, such as a lecture series, museum or theater trips, and walking tours of historic sites. Since the inception of this program, dozens of events have enhanced the co-curriculum (see further discussion of Platinum in Chapter 6).

Another area of improvement since 2000 is off-campus transportation. In response to the needs of a more residential student population, the college contracted with Shortline Bus Company to provide local shuttle service to area shopping centers, the train station, and points of interest. The college also negotiated with Shortline to add the college to the bus route to and from New York City. These services not only provide students with opportunities to get off campus, they enable them to explore what New York City has to offer and to participate in class trips and internships.

Fitness and sports and recreation are important to Ramapo College students. The Bill Bradley Sports and Recreation Center, a 117,000-square-foot facility, which opened in spring 2005, supports a wide range of intercollegiate and intramural athletic programs and provides spaces for students to socialize, practice, swim, exercise, train, and attend classes. The college competes in NCAA Division III athletics and is a member of the New Jersey Athletic Conference (NJAC) and the Eastern Colleges Athletic Conference (ECAC). As of spring 2009, there were twenty-two varsity programs with approximately 350 athletes and twenty different intramural sports programs with 5,500 participants (individuals may have participated in more than one activity) over the course of the year. Several of the varsity sports programs have enjoyed consistent success, especially over the past five years, with many qualifying for post-season tournaments and competition within their respective conferences.

Both the college and the NCAA Division III recognize intercollegiate athletes as students first and athletes second. Therefore, policies are in place to monitor student-athlete progress at regular intervals. In fall 2008, 222 (63.4%) of Ramapo’s student-athletes attained at least a 2.8 semester GPA. (Athletics PowerPoint presentation, on the visiting team Web site).

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AND CAREER SERVICES

Experiential Learning is one of the four pillars of the college’s mission and is emulated in the Middle States Characteristics of Excellence. Career development is recognized as dynamic, experiential, and directly related to each person’s values, interests, skills, and personality. The Governor William T. Cahill Center for Experiential Learning and Career Services (Cahill Center) provides students with opportunities to participate in international and domestic cooperative education, service learning, community service, alternative spring break experiences, the American Democracy Project, and Student Literacy Corps. The unit also oversees the Student Assistant Program and Federal Work Study. Cahill maintains data on each facet of its offerings, including detailed demographics and “personal impact statements” from participating students, which often reflect that their experiences in these programs have had a significant impact on their learning and understanding of the world they live in.

According to the 2008-09 Cahill Center annual report, during fall 2008, 933 students participated in career workshops and programs; 275 attended Graduate School Day, where they met with representatives from sixty-three programs; 201 current students and sixty-three alumni registered with the online job bank of seventy-seven employers; and thirty-one students enrolled in one of two available credit-bearing career courses. The Cooperative
Education program facilitated seventy-seven placements in fall 2008, wherein $137,040 and 308 credits were earned. Of the fall 2008 cooperative education students who responded to a survey, 48% were offered full-time positions and 87% indicated that they would recommend their placement to other students. Through the Student Assistant Program, Federal Work Study, and Community Service programs, 925 students were hired at 715 placements, many of which are conveniently located on campus. In recent years, the Cahill Center staff has had to reevaluate programs and services to respond to changing demands and diminished resources.

LIVING ON CAMPUS

Beginning in the late 1990s, the college began a transition that would take it from being a mostly commuter college to the second-most residential college among New Jersey's senior public colleges. The transition occurred in stages as each new hall opened (1999, 2000, 2003, 2005, and 2007), thereby giving the campus time to adjust to each increase in the residential population. Despite a tripling of housing capacity, there still exists more demand than beds. Although freshman interest in campus housing has remained fairly steady for the last several years (around 85%), the number of transfer students who are interested in living on campus has doubled (to almost 50%). In response, the college renovated Mackin Hall and Bischoff Hall to accommodate three students in each room, thereby further increasing capacity. Local hotels also have been used to provide short-term additional accommodations for students until campus rooms are available. Strategic Enrollment Management Plan goals for increasing retention and diversity, however, are likely to increase the demand for campus housing.

As residential capacity increased, a number of major enhancements were made to respond to students' interests and needs. These include expanded dining/computer/library hours; on- and off-campus shuttle services; increased number of public safety officers and new services; more intramural and recreation programs; additional staff in Health and Counseling Services and Judicial Affairs; and increased weekend programming.

The Residence Life program has evolved over time as different staffing and programming models were tried and refined. The present model includes a master's level professional who is in charge of each hall/complex and works with a team of student employees. To date, the model is working well. Halls are well maintained and students regularly report high satisfaction with the quality of the halls and the campus living experience. According to the Resident Study conducted by the Association of College and University Housing Officers-International/Educational Benchmarking Inc., student satisfaction with facilities rose from a mean of 5.35 in 2005-06, to 5.5 in 2006-07, and 5.54 in 2007-08 (on a scale of 1-7, with 7 being the highest level of satisfaction). Similar results indicate increasing satisfaction with other program areas. Staff and auxiliary services personnel review survey results and make recommendations based on them. In general, Ramapo College residents report higher levels of satisfaction with campus living than residents at other schools against which Ramapo benchmarks, as well as residents at all colleges that participate in the survey. (Complete survey results are available in the Resource Room.)

Becoming a residential college “transformed” the campus. It is now alive at all hours with a high level of involvement in campus activities and hall-sponsored programs. The halls are within easy walking distance of all campus facilities, so it is very convenient for students to participate in campus programs, meet with their study groups, or practice for theater productions. The number of students who remain on campus on weekends grows each year as Student Development and Residence Life add programs on Friday evenings, Saturdays, and Sundays. In addition, regularly scheduled bus transportation to New York City is a benefit for students who have internships in the city, those who enjoy theater and cultural events, and faculty looking to enrich classes with field trips.

Results from national surveys and the previously mentioned study of graduating seniors and recent alumni emphasize the correlation between student satisfaction and success and their experiences with campus living. The staff of the Office of Residence Life is dedicated to providing comfortable and safe residential facilities that are conducive to student learning and engagement.

OTHER SERVICES

Whether residents or commuters, students rely heavily on the college's information technology services, dining services, and campus store.
Technology is ubiquitous on campus and integral to student success. The college seeks to meet all student, faculty, and staff technology needs for hardware, software, and support and service. The Office of Information Technology Services (ITS) maintains more than thirty computer labs on campus, some of which are available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. ITS also provides technical support for students, faculty, and staff through maintenance of an all-campus wireless network, Internet access for the residence halls, and the Luminis portal, which provides multiple services such as e-mail and Moodle (course management system).

The information technology upgrade/replacement strategy is based on classroom usage, which is determined by a series of reports and interviews with students, deans, faculty, and staff. This strategy is also used for the computer labs/classrooms and offices. The unit strives to equip the labs with no computer technology that is more than three years old and no audio/visual equipment more than four years old. As new computer and audio/visual equipment is added, older technology is rotated to labs and classrooms that are less used.

Ramapo Dining Services, contracted through Sodexo, is another integral part of the college experience that is responsive to student needs. The dining facilities have changed significantly in the last decade, including the addition of a convenience store and the renovation of the Birch Tree Inn (resident dining facility) and the Atrium (retail dining facility). Each facility is designed to meet the needs of a community that expects quality, variety, healthy options, regional favorites, and sustainability. Fair trade coffee, fresh salads and wraps, and “green” practices and products are examples of how dining services support the mission of the college and respond to student, faculty, and staff requests. Information on dining locations, hours of operation, nutritional content, meal plans, and menus are posted online and within the facilities.

Each year, Dining Services evaluates and improves its services by soliciting feedback from customers. Methods of assessment include an annual customer satisfaction survey, comment cards in each of the facilities and mailed to catering customers, responses on the resident survey, Facebook interaction, and regular meetings with the Dining Services liaison from the Student Government Association. In a 2008 Sodexo survey of all four dining areas, 63% of the students who responded said they were either “satisfied” or “extremely satisfied.” This compares favorably to institutions the college benchmarks against and represents a 2.5% increase over 2007.

The Campus Store, operated by Follett, carries textbooks, school supplies, apparel, accessories, electronic equipment, supplies for residents, sundry items, and food and beverages. The store offers online purchasing and frequently assesses student satisfaction through customer surveys and secret shopper surveys. In addition, store management works with faculty and students to offer alternatives, such as online books and used books in order to keep textbook prices down. For example, used books rose from 37.3% of books offered in 2007-08 to 40.7% in 2008-09, representing a significant savings for students.

ACCESS AND DIVERSITY (Integrity)

The Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) Program seeks to “provide access to higher education and support for highly motivated students who exhibit the potential for success, but who come from families/communities disadvantaged by low income and a lack of access to quality educational preparation necessary to attend college” (Educational Opportunity Fund Program Mission Statement). Before entering their first semester of college, Educational Opportunity Fund students participate in a summer program to help them transition to their new environment. At that time, they take classes and interact with a mentor. Their first semester courses are determined and registered for them, ensuring that they are placed in the appropriate courses and with schedules that maximize their ability to succeed. During their first and second years of college, students receive peer mentors, career exploration courses, remedial classes, tutoring services, and mental-wellness-related services. During their junior year, students receive tutoring services, a career placement course, and graduate school preparation. Finally, during their senior year, students receive graduate school preparation and academic and emotional support and participate in a senior-preparation retreat. The Educational Opportunity Fund program encourages students to be community leaders and maintain a civic-minded attitude toward their college peers and communities. Assessment results have driven changes within the program, such as expanding and modifying remedial classes; remodeling the Peer Mentor program; and modifying techniques used by professional academic advisors in one-on-one sessions (Educational Opportunity Fund Self-Study, 2008, available in the Resource Room).
Students with disabilities, traditionally underrepresented nationwide, likewise find a welcoming atmosphere at the college, which made a commitment to being physically and attitudinally accessible before the federal government enacted Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The college made this commitment even before the campus buildings were erected. The Office of Specialized Services serves a dual role: to facilitate equal access to curriculum, the physical plant, and programming, and to provide academic support services for eligible students with disabilities. Students who disclose their disabilities have their progress toward their degrees monitored closely, and student satisfaction surveys are conducted at regular intervals. The office offers students transitional programs, including workshops; individualized academic advisement; interpretation of disability-related documentation; joint determination of approved academic adjustments to equalize access (reviewed each semester); self-advocacy practice; facilitation of equal access; and guidance in navigating campus systems.

Several optional services funded by federal grants are available for matriculated undergraduates. These include a Summer Bridge experience, peer and professional tutoring, independent living counseling, learning strategies consultations, cultural enrichment, career development counseling, social activities, adaptive technology training, and mentoring. The Office of Specialized Services relies heavily on the support of a series of Student Support Services grants from the U.S. Department of Education TRIO program to fund both staff and services. In the current economy, the federal government has suspended these grant competitions for the next cycle, leaving the institution with a potential funding shortfall of approximately $300,000 in August 2011 if the grant is not renewed. Such a lack of funding could seriously impact the college’s ability to efficiently meet legally mandated academic accommodations and provide the support services that directly affect the retention and graduation of undergraduate students with disabilities.

In addition to current support programs, many colleges and universities are preparing for a wave of veterans, lured by new education benefits under the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008, also known as the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Since its inception, the college has sought to provide a welcoming environment for veterans and has dedicated resources to serve this population. However, the number of veterans has been relatively small in recent years; thirteen veterans or relatives of deceased veterans were known to have been enrolled in fall 2008 (Institutional Profile). The new GI Bill is expected to generate a more significant population with different challenges and needs. The college is examining every facet of campus life to determine how to meet the needs of this population and ease the transition from barracks to residence halls. Arrangements are currently underway to collaborate with the War Related Illness and Injury Study Center of the U.S. Veterans Administration to conduct relevant programming. Given that the Ramapo College facilities were designed forty years ago to be physically accessible for returning Vietnam veterans, re-focusing on the needs of this component of the student body will be bringing the college “full circle.”

HEALTH AND SAFETY (Integrity)

Many students seek, or are referred to, medical and psychological services to assist them in eliminating barriers that interfere with academic performance and their ability to persist and graduate. The Center for Health and Counseling Services provides individual, group, and educational outreach services to help students achieve these goals. Students access direct services via appointments, walk-ins, or referrals. Health Services and Counseling Services are part of the same unit but are physically separate from one another and operate somewhat independently.

Health Services resides in a freestanding building near the south entrance of the college. The nurse practitioners, registered nurse, and a consulting physician who staff Health Services provide diagnostic and primary health care for a variety of illnesses, as well as education and prevention services. Additionally, the college has an Emergency Medical Service (EMS), which was established by students in 1999 in response to the increasing demand of a more residential population. Fully staffed by students, EMS responded to 252 emergency calls in 2008-09 and celebrates its tenth anniversary in fall 2009.

In addition to providing counseling and health services, these units conduct educational outreach via new-student and parent orientation sessions, classroom presentations, and in response to requests from student groups, faculty, and staff. Peer educators provide and support educational programs, such as the annual wellness fair and
the CHOICES program, which focuses on educating students about the effects of alcohol on their behavior and promoting self-evaluation of drinking patterns. Some students may be referred to CheckPoint, a health and safety educational program designed as a proactive intervention in the areas of alcohol, other drugs, related violence, and anger management.

MINI PROFILE

CENTER FOR HEALTH AND COUNSELING SERVICES
CHECKPOINT PROGRAM

OVERVIEW

Checkpoint is a health and safety education and intervention program for alcohol, other drugs, related violence, and anger management. Students are most often referred to the program through the college judicial affairs process when found in violation of campus alcohol/other drug policies.

ASSESSMENT

In Fiscal Year 2008, 613 students were mandated to CheckPoint. Given the increasing volume of students who are mandated to attend CheckPoint and the fact that there is only one full-time employee responsible for administering the Alcohol and Other Drug and Violence (AODV) prevention and education program, the program needed to be redesigned to accommodate the number of students in need of assessment and education and/or counseling.

In January 2009, Counseling Services incorporated AlcoholEdu (an online alcohol prevention program) into its CheckPoint program to continue to provide students with necessary education and prevention without increasing the demand on limited human resources. This allows the coordinator of substance abuse and violence prevention to quickly assess students at high-risk and to provide the necessary education and counseling. It also allows the coordinator to focus more time and effort on community outreach and prevention education.

OUTCOMES

AlcoholEdu, along with the overall CheckPoint program, has proven to be effective in educating students about alcohol and other drug use and its negative consequences. During the period June 1, 2008, to May 31, 2009, there were 562 CheckPoint sessions (including 195 initial online assessments), of which 6% were “repeaters.” Statistics from previous academic years (2001-02 through 2007-08, combined) indicate a recidivism rate of 26%.

Furthermore, Ramapo EMS reports indicate a reduction in transports to the hospital for alcohol poisoning and/or drug overdoses from 2007-08 to 2008-09:

- Fall 2007 = 22 students transported for AOD
- Spring 2008 = 17 students transported for AOD
- Fall 2008 = 17 students transported for AOD
- Spring 2009 = 12 students transported for AOD

While changing variables, different data-collecting techniques and only one full semester of data for AlcoholEdu make it difficult to draw firm conclusions, it is clear that the program has had a positive effect in educating students, reducing recidivism and freeing up staff time for more critical programs and services.
The Behavioral Intervention Team, established in 2008, assists students in achieving their academic pursuits and in promoting their health and well-being. The director of Judicial Affairs chairs the team, which includes representatives from Counseling Services, Specialized Services, Public Safety, Residence Life and the faculty. This group focuses on prevention and early intervention in situations involving serious distress or engagement in harmful or disruptive behaviors.

The health and safety of students as it relates to critical incidents regarding alcohol use, misuse, and abuse are of paramount concern to the college. Students can be reluctant to contact authorities when they or someone else is in need of urgent medical care due to intoxication. Often they fear the incident will lead to disciplinary action for themselves or others. With this in mind, the college instituted a Good Samaritan Policy in 2008. The policy enables students to report concerns without fear of formal adjudication for code of conduct violations. The judicial affairs office does, however, track cases and recommends follow-up counseling as needed.

The Public Safety office works with external law enforcement and emergency services and internal constituents to provide a safe environment for students, faculty, staff, and visitors. The department regularly publishes reports, as required by law, on incidents occurring on campus and works closely with the Student Government Association liaison to ensure that student questions and concerns are addressed. Students with concerns or needs related to safety may contact the office directly, file a complaint online (anonymously, if desired) or alert the appropriate employee or office.

In 2008, Ramapo College enhanced its emergency response plan and launched an initiative to develop incident control, business continuity, and a culture of “preparedness” on campus. The college was responding to families’ concerns and a directive from the New Jersey governor following nationwide campus tragedies. A director of business continuity was appointed from within the staff to develop a campus-wide business continuity plan. With input from each of the major units and programs involved, the director identified one particular area of concern: low participation rates for the emergency alert notification system, Alert Me Now, which provides cell text and voicemail emergency notifications. To address this concern, the college now asks students to provide emergency contact numbers when they register for courses or to officially “opt out” of the program. This initiative increased participation from 30% to 90%. For less-imminent threats, broadcast e-mails and/or posted notices with the subject heading “Timely Warning” are distributed or posted.

RESPONSIVENESS AND INTEGRITY

Students receive information about their rights and responsibilities as members of Ramapo College during orientation and again (for those who live on campus) when they arrive at their residence halls. This information is available on the college Web site, in the Student Handbook and the Guide to Community Living (available on the visiting team Web site).

Additionally, there are a number of methods available to students who wish to register a complaint, submit an appeal, offer suggestions, or provide positive feedback. Informally, they can address faculty and staff directly, meet or write to the appropriate unit or division head, submit a comment or suggestion via the college’s Web site, or contact the Student Government Association. The processes for lodging formal complaints or inquiries are outlined in the Student Handbook and on the college’s Web site.

COMPLIANCE

The Affirmative Action and Workplace Compliance officer, who is also the Section 504/ADA coordinator, addresses all formal complaints of civil rights violations on campus. The officer reviews policies and procedures and consults the deputy attorney general as needed to ensure consistency and to preserve the students’ right to free speech under the First Amendment. Students who believe that they have been discriminated against are referred to the college’s Anti-Discrimination Policy Statement and Discrimination Complaint Procedures, published in the Student Handbook for grievance resolution. Over the past four years, students filed forty-seven complaints through this office. Most student-against-student complaints were resolved through informal meetings and mediation. Founded
complaints against faculty and staff most often resulted in letters of warning or reprimand or mandated training (Electronic communication from director of affirmative action and workplace compliance).

ACADEMIC JEOPARDY

The Committee on Academic Standards and Procedures (CASP) reviews cases of students who fall into academic jeopardy to determine if the students will be permitted to continue their studies at the college and under what conditions (probation, suspension, etc.). In making its decision, the committee assesses the best course of action based on the student’s explanation for his/her current circumstance; grades; likelihood of meeting graduation requirements; plan for getting back on track; and support from faculty or staff who advise, teach, or counsel the student. Over the past three academic years (2005 through 2008), 307 students were dismissed for failing to meet the required academic standards. Of these, 181 appealed and 122 were reinstated. Further data should be collected to determine the success rate of those reinstated.

GRADE APPEALS

Students have the right to appeal grades, as outlined in the College Catalog (available on the visiting team Web site). The first step in the process is to speak with the appropriate faculty member. The majority of the petitions are resolved at this stage, although the dean of each professor’s school is occasionally asked to review a case if a faculty member declines the grade appeal. Matters involving academic integrity, such as cheating and plagiarism, are referred to the Office of the Provost for investigation.

STUDENT CONDUCT

The Office of Judicial Affairs provides education and intervention related to student conduct, particularly as it relates to the college’s Code of Conduct. The college’s philosophy is that responsible student behavior and conduct is fostered by example, counseling, guidance, admonition, and adherence to college policies, procedures, and regulations. While this office seeks to educate students about the purpose and importance of abiding by policies, it also issues sanctions, when needed, to ensure future adherence to policy and to protect the general population from disruptive behavior. The office oversees adjudication of cases involving Code of Conduct violations and uses judicial boards that consist of students, faculty, and staff to hear the more serious cases. The number of cases adjudicated rose from 500 in 2002 to 907 in 2007, of which 667 were violations in residence halls. The overall increase in cases can be attributed to the increase in the number of resident students.

BEYOND THE BACCALAUREATE

The college encourages alumni to remain connected to and actively involved in the college through its Alumni Association, major college events and celebrations, and continued educational opportunities. Alumni are eligible for tuition-free coursework (one course per semester); enrollment in post-baccalaureate certification sequences or graduate programs at the college; and additional career-related support from the Cahill Center for Experiential Learning and Career Services. With the notable exception of on-campus housing, alumni students may access most of the support and services available to current students.

In the 2007-08 Graduating Senior Survey/Recent Alumni Survey, more than 82% of respondents said they intended to continue their education. This finding demonstrates achievement of the college’s goal of graduating students who are lifelong learners. Of those planning another degree, 57.5% said they would seek a master’s, 20.8% a doctorate, 19.5% a second bachelor’s, and 2.2% other professional pursuits.

There are ample opportunities for alumni to continue to make contributions to the college, such as serving on the Alumni Association Board and its subcommittees; participating in panel discussions and presentations; attending campus events; volunteering as a mentor; attending reunions; and donating to the college. Alumni are often invited to watch varsity contests, attend clinics, or help with community service projects. According to Graduating Senior/Recent Alumni surveys from the last five years, 90% of respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they received
a quality education from Ramapo College and that the courses in their major were of high quality. More than 80% would recommend Ramapo to others. Alumni giving has increased significantly over the past five years, with a 173.8% increase in the total dollars given and a 55% increase in the number of donors (2008 Institutional Profile).

FINDINGS OF THE SELF-STUDY

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Construction of five new residence halls, resulting in a residential campus
- Expansion and renovation of the Bill Bradley Sports and Recreation Center
- Creation of the Strategic Enrollment Management Planning 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
- Formation of the Diversity Action Committee (DAC) and subsequent Campus Climate Survey
- Increasing enrollment while maintaining or raising 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.
- Many units experienced attrition or reduction in resources, which caused the college to reevaluate programs and services and, in some cases, to reduce staffing or diminish offerings.
- Curriculum and data changes enacted at the college over the last few years have compromised the college’s ability to maintain complete accuracy on the NJ Transfer Web site.
- Increasing campus diversity

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Assess the effectiveness of out-of-state, international, and diversity recruitment efforts designed to achieve the college’s goals related to diversity and adjust as needed.
- Assess the effectiveness of recent reorganizations and adjust as needed.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the current academic advisement structure and make improvements as needed.
- Rely less on the TRIO grant for funding programs and services for students with disabilities.
- Assess the needs and outcomes of transfer students in order to refine/improve services related to advisement, registration, and overall student services.