CHAPTER 6

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS AND ASSESSMENT
STANDARDS 11, 12, AND 14
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GOAL 1: ENHANCING ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE
(Ramapo College Strategic Plan 2007-2012, p. 8)

Ramapo College will provide nationally recognized academic programs that support the mission of the College and provide high-quality student learning opportunities. Further, the administrative structure within academic affairs will be designed to support excellence in student learning, teaching, scholarship, and service.

STANDARD 11: EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS

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

THE CONTEXT

Most of the educational offerings at Ramapo College are organized around major and minor programs, the General Education program, and graduate programs. Those that are not are offered through co-curricular, certificate, and other special programs. Degree-seeking undergraduate students can choose from more than 30 majors, ranging from Theater to Chemistry to International Studies, and nearly as many minors (see complete list of major and minor programs available on the visiting team Web site). Some majors entail specified concentrations. Students pursuing the Business Administration major, for example, may concentrate in Finance, Management, or Marketing. Similarly, Sociology majors may concentrate in Criminology. Other majors are combined with professional programs. A Biology major, for example, could also pursue certification as a physician’s assistant through our partnership with the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey.

Ramapo also offers courses through its General Education program that are not associated with a particular major. These courses include College English, Social Issues, and Readings in Humanities. Finally, the college offers courses through its graduate programs in Educational Technology, Liberal Studies, and Nursing. Each educational program at the college is administered through one of the five schools—American and International Studies, Anisfield School of Business, Contemporary Arts, Social Science and Human Services, and Theoretical and Applied Science. Each major and minor, and each of the graduate programs, is housed entirely in a single school. It is possible, though, for faculty in one school to teach courses in another school. The educational offerings made available through these various programs are aligned with the college’s mission, which emphasizes a commitment to a strong curriculum based on the liberal arts, focusing in particular on international education, intercultural understanding, interdisciplinary learning, and experiential learning. These commitments were emphasized further in the current strategic plan, which has as a specific goal the enhancement of academic excellence.

ACADEMIC PLANNING

The four pillars of the college’s mission—interdisciplinary curriculum, international education, intercultural understanding, and experiential learning—are the starting point for academic planning. In spring 2006 Acting Provost Ecker formed the International Education Committee (later referred to as the International Education Task Force) and in summer 2006 Provost Barnett formed task forces for the remaining three pillars. Each task force
defined one of the four pillars, developed a vision statement for it, set college and student learning goals, and made recommendations for integrating it into the curriculum (see task force reports available in the Resource Room). In summer 2007 the provost formed the Learning Goals and Outcomes Task Force and charged it with determining “what every Ramapo graduate should be able to know/do.” This task force used the four Pillar Task Force reports plus the Academic Review Committee’s General Education Report and synthesized their recommendations into a single document (available in the Appendix). All of these task forces presented their reports to the Faculty Assembly, incorporated feedback, and released final versions.

At the May 2008 Faculty In-Service, the provost presented a summary of work to-date titled “Assessment of Student Learning: What have we completed? What are we currently doing? What needs to be done?” (See Power Point slide show on the visiting team Web site). This was the impetus for establishing the assessment goals for the 2008-09 academic year, with particular emphasis on working on General Education assessment, an effort to be spearheaded by the new vice-provost for curriculum and assessment.

**ASSESSMENT AND BENCHMARKING**

The college looks to a number of indicators to determine if it is fulfilling its mission. Assessment occurs at the institutional level as well as in divisions, schools, programs, and units. Environmental scans and analyses of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats produce information regarding student demographics; internal and external opportunities and threats; and internal strengths and weaknesses. The college assesses student needs, engagement, and experiences through national benchmarked surveys, such as the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) survey, the National Survey on Student Engagement (NSSE), the Association for College and University Housing Officers International Educational Benchmarking Incorporated (ACUHO-I/EBI) Resident Study, and internal assessments such as the Graduating Senior/Recent Alumni Survey.

In addition to managing many of these surveys and data, the Office of Institutional Research and Planning produces reports that include quantifiable data used to assess the college’s progress toward its mission and goals as well as comply with state and federal reporting regulations. The Institutional Profile, published annually, includes sections on admissions, enrollment, degrees awarded and student learning outcomes, faculty and instruction, student services, and administrative operations. It presents data in table format and compares current data with the previous year, as well as five-year trends. The Office of Institutional Research also prepares the *Excellence and Accountability Report* (now known as the *State Institutional Profile*). This report is sent to the state of New Jersey so that comparisons can be made among the nine state senior public colleges.

The Institutional Profile, in conjunction with the Accountability Sourcebook (available in the Resource Room), published annually by the New Jersey Association of State Colleges and Universities, describe Ramapo’s mission within the New Jersey public higher education context and highlight Ramapo-specific initiatives and improvements. In addition, each year the Office of Institutional Research and Planning compiles the Middle States Annual Report, which provides data to the college’s accrediting body to demonstrate how Ramapo is meeting national benchmarks. Comparisons to national benchmarks and benchmarks of other organizations that the college belongs to, such as the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges, aid the college in refining goals and allocating resources that further Ramapo’s mission and vision.

The college has made a clear commitment to ensure that individual courses and programs are tied to learning goals. These goals are established at multiple levels of the curriculum. Individual courses have learning goals, some major programs set learning goals at each level of course offerings, and academic units establish their own learning goals as well. At all levels, learning goals are linked to both knowledge and skills. In the Academic Review Committee’s Goals and Objectives for General Education at Ramapo College report (April 2007), for example, thirteen goals are listed and organized into three major categories. These goals, along with the goals and outcomes identified by the four Pillar Task Forces, were brought together in the all-college Learning Goals and Outcomes Task Force Report (available in the Resource Room). In the first category, “Intellectual Skills,” the goals are critical analysis; oral, written and visual communication; information literacy; and technological literacy. The second category, “Social, Global, and Cultural Knowledge,” lists as goals intercultural analysis; global awareness; historical awareness and
civic engagement; and analysis of aesthetic production/work. In the final category, “Method of Inquiry,” the goals are interdisciplinary analysis; experiential learning; scientific reasoning; mathematical reasoning; and ethical and moral reasoning.

Ramapo students’ awareness of learning goals and objectives can vary from level to level. For instance, the Academic Review Committee Manual stipulates that each syllabus includes learning goals for the course, and the committee reviews each new course to ensure that such goals are present. Thus, students taking a section of Introduction to American Studies learn from the course syllabus that they are expected to learn how to identify American Studies as a field of study; to describe and use interdisciplinary methods of analysis; and to locate, evaluate, and analyze primary sources relevant to the field of American Studies. The learning goals beyond the course level are less well known. Those that exist at the program and unit levels generally are present in internal documents and, at one school (Theoretical and Applied Science), on its Web site. For example, the learning goals for the General Education program appear in a document posted on the college Web site, but do not appear with the General Education listing in the online catalog. The Academic Plan’s goals, meanwhile, appear on the provost’s Web site.

MAINTAINING ACADEMIC RIGOR

Content and rigor in educational offerings are conceived primarily at the course and program levels. At the course level, each faculty member is responsible for maintaining a sense of the standards and practices of his or her field, and for developing courses with content and rigor to meet those standards. As new courses are developed, faculty members in the relevant convening group review the courses to ensure they comply with appropriate standards. Some convening groups, such as the history convening group in the School of American and International Studies, establish criteria for courses at each level of the curriculum, requiring, for example, a greater amount of writing in a 200-level course than in a 100-level offering. After convening group approval, unit curriculum committee approval, and approval by the dean, the new course is vetted by the Academic Review Committee, which again evaluates the course in terms of content and rigor. At the program level, major programs have several means to ensure appropriate content and rigor. First, assessment plans are developed to evaluate student learning and ensure that programs of study transmit the necessary skills and knowledge. Second, periodic self-studies are conducted, usually at five-year intervals, with a program evaluation by an outside expert. Finally, accredited programs undergo periodic re-accreditation review.

One objective in the college’s educational offerings is to integrate the upper-level General Education goals into major programs and other learning experiences. It is understood that the General Education program has a more over-arching set of goals and objectives than those conceived by major programs, which are more focused studies. At the same time, the first category of General Education goals from the Academic Review Committee report “Intellectual Skills” lists items that are shared by majors across the college. The other two categories, “Social, Global and Cultural Knowledge” and “Methods of Inquiry,” contain certain goals that may not be shared by all majors (mathematical reasoning, for instance, or historical literacy and civic engagement). The majority of courses in the General Education program also satisfy major requirements, so the goals of the program are tied to those of the majors.

Program requirements are under constant assessment by faculty members who teach in those programs. Existing policies and procedures establish, evaluate, and revise the requirements. Especially in the last three years, as the college has implemented the Curriculum Enhancement Plan, the faculty has been attentive to questions concerning major and minor program requirements. In order to revise program requirements, faculty must list the proposed changes and the rationale for them, which are then submitted for review by the convening group, the dean, and the Academic Review Committee. In some cases, the communication with the committee is for informational purposes only. In other cases, such as when the program revision involves the creation of new courses or when the program changes its name, the committee must approve the proposed revisions. If the revisions are extensive enough to require Academic Review Committee approval, the Provost’s Office must grant approval as well. Program revisions most typically occur as a result of assessment activities or in the context of five-year self-studies and re-accreditation reviews.
New educational offerings at the college generally can be initiated in two ways: faculty can conceive, develop and seek approval for proposed offerings such as majors or minors; or administrative offices can conceive new programs and then enlist faculty to develop them and provide the necessary resources. Significant new offerings, such as new majors, minors, or graduate programs, must be approved by the Academic Review Committee and brought before the Faculty Assembly for a vote. More modest offerings, such as summer programs for high school students or certificate programs, are subject to varying levels of review. The Academic Review Committee, for example, would need to review a new summer program for high school students that grants college credits. Similarly, a new certificate program would need Academic Review Committee approval but would not be brought before the entire faculty for a vote.

**ACADEMIC INNOVATION**

**HONORS PROGRAM**

The College Honors Program, redesigned in 2008, provides a special set of educational offerings designed both to enhance student learning and to create “a community of faculty and students dedicated to intellectual, creative and moral engagement” (College Honors Program Mission Statement). Established in 1989, with the first students completing the program in 1993, the College Honors Program underwent substantial review and revision in the spring of 2008. An Honors Task Force appointed by Provost Barnett drafted proposed changes in May 2008, which the new program director presented to the Faculty Assembly four months later. ARC recommended approving the program changes as well as the first two courses of the new curriculum, and in January 2009 the Faculty Assembly approved those recommendations. During the 2008-09 academic year, provisions for implementing the new program were put into place and it formally debuted in fall 2009.

The goals and objectives of the College Honors Program are clear and explicitly linked to the college’s mission statement and strategic plan. The program is designed to establish a learning community for students and faculty; to provide distinctive academic, co-curricular, and extra-curricular programming; and to “prepare students for a life of accomplishment through an understanding of intercultural and international issues considered critically in an interdisciplinary curriculum” (College Honors Task Force Report, May 2008, available on the visiting team Web site). These goals are linked to the following nine objectives: student-faculty collaboration; intellectual engagement; creative engagement; moral engagement; critical thinking; experiential learning; service to community; interdisciplinary competency; and international competency.

Students interested in joining the Honors Program must submit an application that includes an admission essay. Their engagement and motivation are assessed in a subsequent interview. The cohort admitted for fall 2009 consists of 28 students (from a total of 42 interviewed), including two continuing students and five transfer students. Once admitted, they undertake a course of study that has three essential requirements: a curriculum of selected courses; a College Honors Research or Experience project; and continuing contribution to the community.

The curriculum, with one course per year for those entering the program as first-year students, or one per semester for continuing or transfer students, consists of four requirements. Those entering as first-year students (a majority of those in the program) must enroll in a specified Honors First-Year Seminar. Students must also take an Honors International Issues course at the 200-level, and an Honors Ethics course at the 300-level. The courses they take for these two requirements may also count toward the college’s General Education requirements. The final course is a 400-level Honors Senior Seminar that emphasizes “interdisciplinary analysis and approaches to address contemporary social issues.” (College Honors Task Force Report, May 2008)

In addition to the special curriculum, students must complete a two-semester sequence of research or work and writing that will result in a substantial and culminating College Honors Research or College Honors Experience project. Finally, students must demonstrate a commitment to contribute to the college or to the broader community. To help oversee his or her overall development in the program, each student will now have a faculty mentor.

In addition to its specific requirements, the College Honors Program provides an array of opportunities for students
to discuss their work and develop their thinking. The newly created Honors Suite on the first floor of the A-Wing is an important setting for these opportunities, as it houses a lounge containing a computer lab as well as study and co-curricular student space, an office staffed by student volunteers from the Student Executive Board, and conference space for faculty meetings. So, too, is the annual College Honors Symposium—held for the first time in the spring of 2009—in which students present their capstone research or experience projects to family, friends, and members of the Ramapo College community. The program will also sponsor various co-curricular and extra-curricular activities consistent with its mission and its role in creating a learning community at the college. In fall 2009, for example, the program is scheduled to host a colloquium on the liberal arts in higher education. The College Honors Program is administered by a faculty director, a College Honors Advisory Committee (comprised of an academic dean and faculty from each of the college’s five academic units), and the Student Executive Board.

GRADUATE PROGRAMS

In addition to the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies, Master of Science in Nursing and the Master of Science in Educational Technology (the Masters in Business Administration has been suspended since fall 2004), Ramapo College is looking to expand its graduate offerings, pursuing approval for a Master of Arts in Educational Leadership and Master of Arts in Sustainability Studies (program proposals available in the Resource Room). The desire to expand graduate offerings is motivated by several goals: to capitalize on some of the college’s strong undergraduate programs, create programs for students that eliminate the need for housing, develop new revenue sources, provide programs that are both innovative and reflect the unique attributes of Ramapo College, and to further the college’s commitment to meet public needs, like the need for educational leadership.

This last goal is outlined in the Educational Leadership Graduate Program Proposal: “Current research overwhelmingly supports the claim that educational leadership is an essential ingredient in any school reform effort, as well as improving student achievement. In fact, much of this research demonstrates that school leadership is second only to teacher instruction among such school related factors” (Leithwood, Louis and Wahlstrom, 2004). According to the influential report, How Leadership Influences Student Learning, “talented educational leaders are the essential catalyst to any effective and meaningful school reform. Therefore, schools, specifically those that are deemed underperforming, are very unlikely to improve without talented leadership” (Educational Leadership Graduate Program Proposal, 2008. p. 2).

Ramapo College has always approached the training of teachers by demanding that students develop area competency—specifically, a major—in addition to taking the requisite courses in teacher education. This approach to teacher education was unique in New Jersey until recently, when state regulations were changed to mirror this model. The development of a curriculum in educational leadership at the graduate level was motivated in part by responding to the “state and national shortage of high quality administrators who value instructional excellence and create a culture that promotes student achievement” (Educational Leadership Graduate Program Proposal, p. 2). The educational leadership curriculum also reflects the college’s desire to remain at the cutting edge of teacher training and educational reform.

The Master of Arts in Sustainability Studies is an interdisciplinary program that approaches the issue of sustainability in an organic, creative way: “The concept of sustainability applies comprehensively to human inhabitation of the earth and refers to the economic and social aspects of achieving a hospitable livelihood within the earth’s ecological limits. Sustainability transcends the boundaries of three related sets of objectives to incorporate a triple bottom line: economic prosperity, social and cultural needs, and ecological resilience and restoration” (Sustainability Studies Graduate Program Proposal, 2008, p. 2).

The new program would fill a need in the region. There are existing graduate curricula in business and environmental management programs that address sustainability along relatively narrow lines. Yet no single program focuses on sustainability practice in the comprehensive way that Ramapo has proposed, with an emphasis on political, economic, social, cultural, and scientific analysis.

Both of these proposed offerings reflect the college’s commitment to develop graduate programs that build upon undergraduate strengths and that are in sync with the college’s mission. These programs will also provide students
with specific skills sets that would be useful in both the educational and corporate sectors. There remains, however, a concern among faculty regarding the impact of these new professional programs on the liberal arts, particularly regarding resource allocation and the impact on undergraduate education. (See Liberal and Professional Studies Report, September 2009, available in the Resource Room).

EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS AND TRANSFER STUDENTS

Transfer students currently make up 41.1% of undergraduate student enrollment (2008 Institutional Profile). All transfer students receive an evaluation within two weeks of admission that outlines which course credits will be accepted. Most transfer students (58%) come from New Jersey. Prospective transfers attending a New Jersey community college can view www.njtransfer.org to find course-by-course equivalencies. The Center for Academic Advisement and First-Year Experience (CAAFYE) and the Office of Admissions are currently updating Ramapo’s information on this Web site, which also outlines the grades needed for transferring course credits and the total amount accepted from two-year institutions (65 credits, although that will soon drop to 64) and four-year institutions (80 credits). Academic advisors are also available at student orientations to explain policies and procedures.

While a substantial number of transfer credits are accepted from other institutions, not all credits represent exact course equivalencies. Some courses may transfer in as elective courses, which could force students to retake classes entirely or enroll in supplemental courses. This may hinder a transfer student’s plan to graduate in four years. On the other hand, New Jersey mandates that all associate degrees from a two-year New Jersey college will be fully transferable to a four-year institution.

NJ STARS is a scholarship program that covers the cost of up to five semesters of tuition and approved fees at New Jersey’s 19 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 institution. Ramapo College accepts five to seven NJ STARS students per year.

State transfer policies help to ensure a seamless transition for students moving from a two-year to a four-year institution, and give students reasonable assurance they can complete their degrees in four years. But those policies pose challenges for the college in a number of areas, described below.

COURSE OFFERINGS

The college is at a disadvantage when it plans future course offerings because it does not know which courses transfer students will require. Possible solutions include enrollment restrictions in certain programs and limits on switching majors, although these options may be burdensome for students.

STUDENT PREPAREDNESS

Incoming transfer students who have earned an associate’s degree must be able to complete their bachelor’s degree within two years. In many programs, this may require students to take 300-level courses for which they are not prepared. Other programs, such as Teacher Education, cannot be completed in two years. The college is communicating with its major feeder schools to ensure their two-year degree programs offer the essential courses needed for students to succeed once they transfer.

ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT

Historically, many low-income students have had no choice but to begin their higher education at a community college and then transfer to a four-year college. Due to economic conditions, many students of varying socioeconomic backgrounds are now pursuing the community college path first. This trend poses a challenge for Ramapo as the college strives to meet projected enrollment numbers.
Ramapo works diligently to ensure that state transfer policies are adhered to and that all schools within the institution are planning their curriculum accordingly. The college is working with the community colleges to strengthen curricula partnerships and is hopeful that the state will assist by standardizing the curriculum among community colleges. Ultimately, we are fully aware of the state mandates regarding transfer students and are working internally and with external parties to help ensure the overall success of our transfer students and the college as a whole.

As part of this self-study report, Ramapo conducted analyses of the difference in academic performance between transfer and non-transfer students. A sample of 1,014 students from forty-four 300-level courses was taken in the spring 2007 and fall 2007 semesters. The selected courses are among the common core courses that transfer and non-transfer students take. Students from all majors offered by the college were included in the sample study. The performances of transfer and non-transfer students were then analyzed based on grades received in the course; term grade point average (a student’s current semester performance); and cumulative GPA (a student’s performance since his or her first registration at the college).

The analyses showed there was a significant difference between transfer and non-transfer student performance in all three indicators. In general, the non-transfer students performed better than the transfer students. Specifically, transfer students received lower grades in their courses. Transfer students also had lower GPAs, both term and cumulative. (Analysis of Transfer vs. Non-Transfer Students’ Performance, 2009, available in the Resource Room). These results indicate that transfer students may require enhanced services to ease their transition to the college. Targeted services such as course transfer evaluation, information sessions, and reviews of articulation agreements are needed. The Center for Academic Advisement and the First-Year Experience is currently reviewing such enhanced services.

SUPPORTING ACADEMICS

THE POTTER LIBRARY AND INFORMATION LITERACY

The library provides students, faculty and staff with a wide array of services. Many of the following items, including all databases, are available off-campus as well.

- The open access catalog includes links to thousands of online U.S. government documents, as well as e-books selected on a title-by-title basis.
- The reference collection is always current, and the circulating book collection has been expanded through special funding over the past nine years.
- The library maintains a collection of Course Reserves materials to support faculty members’ instructional requirements for specific courses. Course Reserves materials may include books, photocopies, journal articles, video recordings, DVDs, and compact discs. In 2001, traditional Course Reserves (photocopies) were enhanced by electronic versions (PDF files) of scanned photocopies.
- Residents of New Jersey, as well as those from Rockland County, N.Y. (on the New Jersey border), may use the library and may borrow a limited number of books as long as they have applied for a community borrower’s card. In addition, Ramapo alumni, Friends of the Library, and other reciprocal borrowers from the New Jersey Academic Library Network and Virtual Academic Library Environment also have borrowing privileges.
- The library subscribes to more than 80 proprietary databases and provides access to an additional 20. Many of these services provide full-text articles. Many colleges have eliminated databases in these financially difficult times, and Potter Library lost access to more than 15 databases when the New Jersey Knowledge Initiative was not funded. Despite these challenges, every effort has been made to add the databases most requested by faculty.
In 2008, the nursing program moved in its entirety to Ramapo’s campus (from the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey). This consolidation required the addition of specific health, medical, and nursing databases. Among the new databases acquired in fall 2008 were Oxford Language Dictionaries, MathSciNet, Proquest Central, and CQ Almanac. In spring 2009, the library added SciFinder Scholar. A major recent purchase was Project MUSE, a database requested by the faculty of the School of American and International Studies.

A complement to database coverage is the Journal Finder feature, which identifies the library’s coverage of periodicals by title (see: http://ramapo.1cate.com). This feature was also added to the databases, enabling the researcher to jump from one database to another to access the full text of each article when available.

Library faculty added four online tutorials in the summer of 2008 that teach research basics (see http://library.ramapo.edu/libtutor.html). Each incorporates quiz questions that allow students to determine immediately, and privately, if they have mastered the material. These tutorials could eventually take the place of the information literacy sessions for introductory-level courses. Fortunately, the tutorials were mounted in time for the rush of online courses offered during the 2008 summer session. In addition, library faculty are making efforts to create more advanced tutorials, both for general research assistance and pertaining to undergraduate program majors.

Over the years, the library’s Web site has undergone both aesthetic and organizational changes. The current Web site went live in 2005. That year the Web site generated slightly under 150,000 visits and about 1 million hits. Prior to 2005, the Web site only averaged slightly over 4,700 visits per month. Since then use of the site has gradually increased. In 2009 the site generated more than 180,000 visits and more than 2 million hits. The library’s Web site is again being re-designed and re-structured to better serve the community. To prepare for this major change, library faculty studied both usage statistics and student and faculty responses on surveys and at roundtable discussions. This qualitative and quantitative analysis revealed the need for improved navigation and organization. A beta version of the new Web site will be ready for review by the Ramapo community in March 2010 and will go live in the summer of 2010.

The library has long published online subject guides that provide links to online resources for further study. The format is being revamped and more inclusive pathfinders will soon be available. A pathfinder is planned for each of the undergraduate program majors.

Online guides are prepared for the information literacy session for each class. These guides contain links to material selected for the specific course or assignment, and they remain available for the students’ use throughout the semester. In academic year 2008-2009, several librarians experimented with wikis instead of static pages to allow students to add their own material and share information. In an effort to maintain ownership of the online guides and to provide uniformity, the library recently subscribed to LibGuides. In addition to the benefits afforded by wikis, LibGuides provide a dynamic format that promotes student use through the use of interactive features, e.g., comments and rankings. LibGuides also incorporate interactive content, such as videos, and, very importantly, they capture usage statistics.

Interlibrary loan (ILL) request forms for books or articles are available online (see http://library.ramapo.edu/ill.html). When using the Journal Finder feature, a direct link to an ILL request form is provided if the required periodical is not available either in print or online through a database.

Reciprocal borrowing from sister New Jersey institutions, including Rutgers University, has long been available for faculty. It was recently made available for students through our consortium membership in VALE, the New Jersey Virtual Academic Library Environment.

In January 2009, the library faculty introduced a new information literacy program to the faculty, replacing a plan that did not sufficiently engage faculty participation. The purpose of the new program was to weave information literacy into the students’ four-year course of study. Library faculty identified the specific classes in which the information literacy competencies, as delineated by the Association of College and Research Libraries, could be introduced. A curriculum map displayed the desired outcomes for First Year Seminar, College English, Readings in Humanities, and the courses in particular majors. Library faculty developed the information literacy mission.
statement, goals, and objectives that reflect this major undertaking. The teaching faculty was invited to provide feedback and collaborate in the vital task of infusing information literacy into the students’ college experience (see: http://library.ramapo.edu/gatewayinfolit.html).

The library’s information literacy mission statement directs the library faculty to “encourage the development of an information literate college community...by collaborating with colleagues across the campus to integrate information literacy into academic programs.” The Library Advisory Group, which is composed of all the librarians, one faculty member from each academic unit, and student representatives, was created in fall 2008 to address this need for cross-campus collaboration. Discussions by Library Advisory Group members led to the new Information Literacy Plan, “Strategies for a Progressive Approach,” which was unveiled at the Faculty Assembly In-Service on January 15, 2009.

This more flexible plan invites the convening groups to determine where students will acquire four specific information literacy competencies within the course of study in their majors (see: http://library.ramapo.edu/inservice.html). The goal of “The Plan” is for students to learn the following:

- To understand the assignment and determine how much information is needed
- To find and evaluate the information needed
- To incorporate the appropriate information
- To avoid plagiarism and cite sources correctly.

This progressive approach was well received, and meetings are scheduled for library faculty to discuss it further at convening group meetings. Library faculty members are refining rubrics for the infusion of the four competencies in 100/200, 300/400, and capstone level courses.

Another experimental approach introduced recently was the use of clickers (remote personal response systems) to gauge student knowledge on various information literacy competencies. The librarians developed a core group of questions to be used for fall 2009 “beginner researcher” level classes, with a focus on College English. The results will demonstrate which areas the librarians should pinpoint for future instruction. Students and teaching faculty members alike enjoyed the use of clickers, and the library faculty members are now able to collect assessment data that will prove useful.

**CO-CURRICULAR PROGRAMS**

Co-curricular programming at Ramapo College is significant and often provided in partnership with faculty. There is a long tradition at the college of faculty and staff working closely together to provide students with rich learning experiences both in and out of the classroom. The recent reorganization of the Division of Student Affairs, which now reports to the provost, emphasizes the importance of this partnership and allows for greater synergy. The experiential learning component of each course provides further opportunities for collaboration. Through co-curricular programs such as cooperative education, internships, alternative spring breaks, attendance at professional conferences, attendance at lectures, discussions and performances, and involvement in clubs and organizations, students have opportunities to learn new skills, lead an organization, make contributions to the community, contribute to social change, and acquire new understandings and perspectives of the world.

There are currently 75 student clubs and organizations at the college. The clubs represent a wide range of interests, including academic, political, cultural, social justice, religious, recreational, and special interest. The 22 fraternities and sororities also have a strong presence on campus and contribute to campus life through their service projects and social events. It is common for students to participate in more than one club or organization, and collaboration between groups is strongly encouraged through targeted retreats and special funding. Faculty and staff contribute greatly to co-curricular programs by attending events, serving as advisors, initiating programs and activities, and serving as mentors. In recent years there has been an increased effort to both link such programming to the
strategic plan and emphasize the impact that the co-curriculum has on student learning. When submitting budget proposals, clubs must indicate how these programs align with the related goals of the strategic plan and indicate the desired outcomes of the event or program. Furthermore, their mid-year and year-end reports are expected to reflect the success or failure in achieving these outcomes.

More than 12% of the student activities budget (which comes from student fees) is allocated specifically for faculty-initiated programs, trips, and conferences that benefit students. In addition, faculty members advise a majority of the clubs and organizations, which also receive funding for programs and lectures. These programs have provided students with opportunities to participate in faculty research, present papers at or attend professional conferences, visit local museums, and attend theatrical performances (see mini profile on the Platinum Series later in this chapter).

In addition to student-initiated and faculty-initiated programs, the Office of Student Development, as well as many other units across campus, offers major programs and events intended to educate, entertain, and engage students. Major lectures, concerts and performances, Octoberfest, ancestry week and month celebrations, and Greek Week provide further opportunities for student engagement. The Office of Student Development conducts regular assessments to gauge student interest and determine if the intended outcomes of programs are being met. An online survey conducted in spring 2009 revealed that approximately two-thirds of students found the events to be good or excellent, 24% found them to be satisfactory, and only 5% found them to be unsatisfactory. Individual events are also assessed to see if the learning objectives established by the office are being met. Survey results are communicated through club/organization officers meetings.

The Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies also contributes to the co-curricula life of the college. The center was created in 1980 and became a part of Ramapo College in 2002. It seeks to educate the northern New Jersey community about the tragedy of Hitler’s war against the Jews and other genocides. Today, the center continues to fulfill this mission through educational programs for people of all ages. Programming focuses on the history and lessons of the Holocaust, genocide in Armenia and Darfur, and other similar tragedies.

The center sponsors a series of annual activities that serve both the campus and broader communities. These activities include public lectures featuring leading scholars and human rights activists, Yom HaShoah and Kristallnacht commemoration events, workshops for teachers in grades K-12, a speaker’s bureau, scholarly research, outreach, the Video Testimony Project, and course offerings both at Ramapo College and for American students abroad.

Currently, the center is focused on developing a lecture series on the Armenian Genocide, sensitivity-training workshops for law enforcement, and curriculum modules on the Holocaust and genocide that correlate to the New Jersey State Core Curriculum Standards in Social Studies and Language Arts for grades K-12.
MINI PROFILE

PLATINUM SERIES

To combine the strengths of the college's curriculum and co-curriculum activities, the Office of Student Development created the Platinum Series program in fall 2004. The Platinum Series was designed to “complement academia by providing intellectually challenging and enriching programs, as well as opportunities to experience the arts and other forms of creative expression” (Platinum Series Mission Statement). The program provides financial and administrative support for faculty to carry out a wide range of co-curricular activities. Each semester faculty members are invited to submit grant applications detailing their proposed activities—a museum trip, a visit to a historic site, an on-campus film or lecture series—and the required budget. The application guidelines for the fall 2009 semester indicate that priority would be given to projects that “provide out-of-class opportunities for students to interact with faculty,” “have a campus-wide impact and are available to all students,” “complement the academic curriculum and enhance the quality of academia on campus,” “clearly identify and outline a learning objective for the campus community,” and “involve faculty or students from more than one school.” (June 2009 Platinum Series Grants memorandum)

Grants are available for larger projects that extend through the fiscal/academic year, such as a lecture series; typically single-day activities such as a museum or theater visit; and more immediate projects that arise from time to time, such as a class-art exhibit. Since the program began, dozens of events that faculty members initiated and led have been added to the college’s co-curricular programming, such as: a trip to the Studio Museum of Harlem and El del Barrio; a “Story Hour” visiting writer series; a trip to the African Art Museum of the Society of African Missions; and a visiting lecturer on contemporary Mayan Culture.

In the 2008-2009 academic year, forty-six such events were sponsored by the Platinum Series, with an average attendance of 38 students per activity. Faculty who receive grants must agree to carry out a post-event review that includes distributing and collecting student questionnaires. It is this review process that helps ensure the learning objectives of each project are being met. The program has proven to be a great success and has been the basis for some of the most exciting and consistent co-curricular programming in recent years at the college.

STANDARD 12: GENERAL EDUCATION

The institution’s curricula are designed so that students acquire and demonstrate college-level proficiency in general education and essential skills, including at least oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, and technological competency.

THE CONTEXT

Students graduating from Ramapo College are intellectually grounded in a General Education program that embraces the ideals of a liberal arts education. Founded on the college’s pillars of interdisciplinary curriculum, international education, intercultural understanding, and experiential learning, the General Education program seeks to provide the necessary foundation to equip lifelong learners for the challenges of understanding and responding to complex contemporary issues. In order to provide an academic experience that emphasizes excellence and integrity, the program guides students through a curriculum that develops college-level proficiency in a variety of areas:

- Intellectual Skills: Oral and written communication, critical analysis and reasoning, technological competency, and information literacy
• Social, Global, and Cultural Knowledge: Intercultural analysis, global awareness, historical literacy, civic engagement, and analysis of aesthetics

• Methods of Inquiry: Interdisciplinary analysis, experiential learning, scientific reasoning, mathematical reasoning, and ethical and moral reasoning.

These areas are embedded in a curriculum consisting of requirements (40 credits) that are carefully sequenced through two years of course work at the 100 and 200 levels (see General Education information in the College Catalog). These requirements provide basic and supplementary knowledge that prepare students for the major areas of study which are housed in the college's thematic and interdisciplinary learning units, such as the School of American and International Studies. Each school is expected to contribute courses and faculty to fulfill general education program goals and requirements.

RECENT HISTORY

Ramapo College has made a continuous attempt to improve and expand upon its General Education program offerings. For example, as recently as 2006 the program was revised and updated with the college’s new Curriculum Enhancement Plan. This plan combined the best features of the previous General Education program with innovative pedagogical approaches. The Curriculum Enhancement Plan was the college’s institutional attempt to satisfy its General Education needs and vision and to advance our service to students:

“The better the curriculum, the greater the value of the degree, both in terms of what you gain from the content of the curriculum and, externally, in terms of how the degree is regarded within the larger community.” (Curriculum Enhancement Plan available in the Resource Room)

The new curriculum was designed to:

• Provide more consistently rigorous sets of courses in general education and majors

• Reinforce the four pillars of our mission (international, interdisciplinary, intercultural and experiential education)

• Create teaching and learning environments appropriate for a first-rate residential liberal arts college

• Enhance connections between the liberal arts and professional programs

• Continue to attract outstanding faculty and students to the institution.

REQUIREMENTS

Ramapo College requires students to complete a minimum of 10 General Education courses (40 credits) in the areas of science, social science, humanities, intercultural studies, and international issues. The General Education program is designed to provide students with academic skills and a framework of analysis to assist them in fulfilling the college’s mission. It provides for academic skills development in written and verbal communication; mathematical reasoning; introductory work in science, social science, and the humanities; appreciation of cultural diversity and international issues.

Students are prepared to think in historical terms, with an understanding of how societal divisions have been based on race, gender, class, and culture. While the General Education program begins with a Western orientation, it expands into a multicultural and global one that promotes a greater sensitivity to cultural diversity at both the local and global levels. In exploring cultural diversity, this perspective is designed to provide an understanding of the differences in human behavior and expression (see course descriptions on the Center for Academic Advisement and the First-Year Experience Web site).

The General Education curriculum is also designed to examine the relationship of the individual to the development of modern social and political institutions. A large number of General Education courses that meet the intercultural, international, and arts and humanities distribution requirements focus on personal and social capacities for
learning, cooperation, conflict resolution, individual and social transformation, and the rise of modern social and political institutions.

The basic tenet of the General Education program is to foster the development of critical thinking skills so that Ramapo students grasp the complex nature of social, political, and psychological issues in the 21st century. Each course emphasizes that the ability to think critically is essential to become an effective citizen in our increasingly global society. All of these courses serve as foundations for the skills and knowledge needed to support the college’s liberal arts mission and its four pillars. The following is a listing and description of the ten General Education requirements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTD 101</td>
<td>First-Year Seminar</td>
<td>4 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGL 180</td>
<td>College English</td>
<td>4 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOSC 101</td>
<td>Social Issues</td>
<td>4 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 Level History Course</td>
<td></td>
<td>4 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 Level Math Reasoning Course</td>
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<td>4 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 Level Science Course</td>
<td></td>
<td>4 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIID 201</td>
<td>Readings in Humanities</td>
<td>4 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercultural North America Course</td>
<td></td>
<td>4 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Issues Course</td>
<td></td>
<td>4 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topics in the Arts, Humanities or Social Sciences</td>
<td></td>
<td>4 credits</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**INTD 101 FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR, (100 LEVEL) 4 CREDITS**

This course is designed for first-year students. The First-Year Seminar (FYS) provides a comprehensive introduction to college-level learning. FYS courses are developed around an academic theme or topic tied to the expertise of each course instructor, providing students with the opportunity to select a seminar that best suits their interests. FYS encourages new students to participate in a community of learners, to strengthen their critical thinking skills, and to communicate effectively both orally and in writing.

**SOSC 101 SOCIAL ISSUES, (100 LEVEL) 4 CREDITS**

Most students are given a choice of taking either SOSC 101 Social Issues or BADM 115 Perspectives of Business and Society as part of their General Education core requirements. Social Issues is a fundamental course providing an understanding of societal divisions based on culture, class, race, and gender. Perspectives is a course that explores modern American business.

**ENGL 180 COLLEGE ENGLISH, (100 LEVEL) 4 CREDITS**

The objective of this course is to strengthen students’ critical reading and writing. The course requires students to complete a research paper and develop information literacy. Students participate in revising, peer critiquing, and faculty-student conferences. This course supports student communication skills.

**HISTORY CATEGORY, (100 LEVEL) 4 CREDITS**

The courses in this category are designed to develop an appreciation of change over time and the often complex forces that have shaped the past. Students gain an understanding not just of content, but of historical process and method as well. Students choose one of the following courses to meet this requirement:

- HIST 101 Introduction to U.S. History I
- HIST 102 Introduction to U.S. History II
- HIST 105 Western Studies I
- HIST 106 Western Studies II
- HIST 109 World Civilization I
- HIST 110 World Civilization II
MATHEMATICAL REASONING CATEGORY, (100 LEVEL) 4 CREDITS

The courses in this category develop a student’s mathematical reasoning skills, including the formulation and solution of problems, critical thinking, and abstract reasoning.

SCIENCE WITH EXPERIENTIAL COMPONENT CATEGORY, (100 LEVEL) 4 CREDITS

This category contains 100-level science courses with a significant experiential component, such as a lab project or field work. Students in these courses will create and analyze data. A few majors outside the School of Theoretical and Applied Science specify a particular science course, but most students are free to choose.

AIID 201 READINGS IN HUMANITIES, (200 LEVEL) 4 CREDITS

This course is an introduction to major texts by authors who have produced distinctive statements about the human experience. The common core of readings includes selections from the Bible, Greek literature and philosophy, Shakespearean literature, and modern works. The course is designed to enhance students' appreciation of the ways historical and philosophical narratives, fiction, poetry, and drama have helped enrich our understanding of human experience through extensive reading and reflective writing.

INTERCULTURAL NORTH AMERICA CATEGORY, (200 – 300 LEVEL) 4 CREDITS

This category is designed to provide students with an understanding of different cultures and the relationships among cultures and peoples within North America (i.e., the United States, Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean). Students reflect upon and analyze texts and products that illustrate the symbolic nature of culture and the exchange of meaning. Courses in this category examine cultural and artistic productions, everyday life, material and other manifestations of culture, as well as how these are linked to heritages and peoples beyond North America.

INTERNATIONAL ISSUES CATEGORY, (200 – 300 LEVEL) 4 CREDITS

The objective of this course category is to provide a context through which students learn to interpret and critically analyze recent world events, focusing on the coordination of economic, cultural, social, and political activities. Courses in this category examine the increasing interconnectedness of nations and peoples throughout the 20th and 21st centuries.

TOPICS: ARTS, HUMANITIES CATEGORY OR SOCIAL SCIENCES (200 – 300 LEVEL) 4 CREDITS

All students must take one course in one of these two categories. Arts/Humanities students must take a Topics: Social Science course and Social Science majors must take a Topics: Arts and Humanities course. All other students can choose between the categories. The topics courses address subject matter in an historical context and feature readings and/or other “texts” including film and visual arts, where appropriate.

WRITING INTENSIVE REQUIREMENT

Four writing-intensive courses are required: ENGL 180 College English, AIID 201 Readings in Humanities and two other courses. These two courses will consist of any 200–300 level writing intensive course and a disciplinary or interdisciplinary capstone course.

EXPERIENTIAL COMPONENT

Independent from the expectations covered in class, each course offered at the college requires students to perform five hours of experiential learning through the semester in order to enhance the student’s understanding of the material. Faculty have used a variety of strategies to meet this requirement, including field trips, special lectures, outside projects, performances, and reading groups.
GENERAL EDUCATION AND MAJOR AREAS OF STUDY

As outlined above, Ramapo instituted the Curriculum Enhancement Plan (CEP) for the purpose of producing a more rigorous set of courses in the General Education program, and to enhance connections with the college’s professional programs. Another goal of the Curriculum Enhancement Plan was to develop a curriculum plan that would continue to attract outstanding faculty and students to the college.

A major feature of the Curriculum Enhancement Plan was changing the number of credits for courses and reducing the number of courses required for graduation. Credits went from three to four per course in the new system, although pre-Curriculum Enhancement Plan lab courses, art studio courses, and some lecture courses were 4 credits already. In addition, classes now meet for a longer period of time and are more comprehensive in nature. The standard teaching load has now been reduced to three courses but in-class time is only 3.6 credits, so faculty members must contract a flex unit with their dean on the development of a specific scholarly or programmatic project in order to reach the 12-credit teaching load per semester required by the AFT contract (see Unit Plan/CEP Memoranda of Agreement).

Each major area of study is designed to have a coherent and well-integrated curriculum supporting the program’s goals and objectives within a highly structured liberal arts framework. The General Education program seeks to prepare students with the skills and knowledge necessary to fulfill the requirements for each program. It is incumbent upon the faculty of each program to develop assessment tools that track the manner in which General Education courses are meeting program goals and objectives. Students are oriented to the program’s goals and requirements through the College Catalog, the Advisement Center, and faculty advisors in their major areas of study.

ADMINISTRATION, ASSESSMENT AND OVERSIGHT

Although individual schools and programs are responsible for assessing their contributions to General Education and the manner in which General Education satisfies program goals, the program is also assessed through the Office of the Provost. Specifically, the Vice Provost for Curriculum and Assessment is responsible for monitoring the progress of the program and assessing program effectiveness. Additionally, faculty resources and development for general education courses are offered through assistance and facilitation by the Faculty Resource Center and Office of the Provost. Given the lack of constancy with these positions and the decentralized structure of the college, the need for more centralized oversight in General Education is evident. A preliminary attempt at such assessment is reflected in Figure 1 (and is also described in a later section on Standard 14).

In spring 2008, pilot assessment was done in a variety of General Education courses. Figure 1 indicates the courses piloted and the goals for which one or more objectives were assessed (summary prepared by the Vice Provost for Curriculum and Global Affairs, summer 2008, available in the Resource Room). As indicated in the report, assessment instruments varied and, in some cases, the resulting data indicated more about the assessment methodology than student learning, which is to be expected from a pilot.

However, continuing to establish effective assessment strategies and program administration will be a necessary activity over the next few years. To this end, the position of associate provost for global education and curriculum was reconstituted as the vice provost of curriculum and assessment, effective summer 2008, and a new vice provost was hired. That vice provost vacated the position in June 2009. An interim vice provost was appointed from the faculty in September 2009.
STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Learning Goals</th>
<th>History II</th>
<th>Readings in Humanities</th>
<th>Social Issues</th>
<th>Science*</th>
<th>Elementary Probability and Statistics</th>
<th>First-Year Seminar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
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<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information Literacy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>In-Depth Knowledge</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding of the Natural World</td>
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<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Civic Engagement</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Interdisciplinary Analysis</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercultural/International Perspective</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*sections of Introduction to Biology, Introduction to Geology, Introduction to Environmental Science, World of Chemistry

Source: General Education Pilot Assessment (Spring 2008)

STANDARD 14: ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING

Assessment of student learning demonstrates that, at graduation or other appropriate points, the institution’s students have knowledge, skills and competencies consistent with institutional and appropriate higher education goals.

SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS

In the last ten years Ramapo College has made great strides in creating a culture of assessment, particularly the assessment of student learning. Assessment of student learning has been institutionalized by various means: the creation of the position of vice provost for curriculum and assessment; the creation of the Assessment Office, the Faculty Resource Center, and the Academic Review Committee; regular participation in Greater Expectations; and the regular five-year program review process. Every major program has established student learning goals and is engaged in assessment. More than half the programs (60%) are at the advanced stage of assessment, having completed the cycle and loop back at least once (see Figure 4). Every program has created both direct and indirect modes of assessment, and most programs (more than 90%) have created centralized data collection and incorporated program changes due to assessment (see Figure 4). Learning goals, aligned with the college’s mission, are established and assessed at the course level (see Figures 2 and 3), program level, and unit level.

Assessment of General Education has occurred at the course level and is occurring at the program level, in part with the implementation of the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) test in Fall 2008. Assessment will be continuous under the leadership of the vice provost for curriculum and assessment. (See General Education at Ramapo College, 2006-2009, available in the Appendix.) Three of the college’s professional programs have successfully
undergone accreditation (Teacher Education, Social Work and Nursing) and the college’s business school is well on its way to AACSB accreditation (team visit, fall 2010). The president and the provost have been deeply involved and committed to the assessment process at the level of the institution as well as student learning, providing both leadership and resources. All units of the college are now engaged in both planning and outcomes assessment, which are tied to the allocation and distribution of resources (further discussion in Chapter 3).

THE CONTEXT

Since its last Middle States re-accreditation, Ramapo College has made considerable progress in the assessment of student learning by instituting more systematic and comprehensive practices in every academic unit of the college. This effort began in the spring of 2000 with the establishment of a Faculty Assessment Task Force. Each of the schools within the college, as well as the library, Institutional Research, and Academic Affairs, was represented on the panel. The task force was chaired by the directors of the Nursing and Social Work programs, both of whom had extensive experience with outcomes assessment due to their accreditation from national accrediting bodies (Nursing and Social Work self-studies available in the Resource Room).

It was deemed important from the outset that assessment of student learning be more than a mechanical process, and that it should be imbedded within the academic culture of the college. Primary focus was placed on the majors, with each member of the task force serving as a liaison to several major programs. Numerous meetings were held with the convening groups of each major for the purpose of structuring an assessment process that could best evaluate student learning in that program. No one method of assessment was prescribed as a “best practice” and each major program was given autonomy in its choice of methods. This was a slow and arduous process that was valuable not only for the improved assessment processes that resulted, but also for the greater sense of ownership achieved.

The process was in its infancy when the college began a complete curricular reform in 2001-02, with revisions to the majors, the school cores and the General Education program. This transition gave faculty an opportunity to take a fresh look at their majors, with an eye toward incorporating new assessment procedures. By June 2001, the task force received assessment reports for 78% of the majors, 60% of which had completed some analyses on outcomes data. By February of 2002, 100% of the disciplinary convening groups had included discussion of their assessment plans as part of the five-year plan for their programs.

In addition to the work of the task force, the college established a Faculty Resource Center in 2003. The center continues to sponsor programs to enhance teaching effectiveness, including workshops on early assessment of the classroom environment, e-portfolios, rubrics as tools for assessment and grading, and the fostering of deep learning through undergraduate research. In addition, periodic faculty in-service days have been devoted to assessment of student learning. In 2004, the Academic Review Committee (ARC) established uniform guidelines for all course syllabi and required the inclusion of a statement of learning objectives within the documents (Academic and Curricular Guidelines Manual and sample course syllabi available in the Resource Room).

The Greater Expectations Task Force was established in 2005. As part of the planning process for a comprehensive curricular reform, the college sent a team to the Greater Expectations Institute, a major initiative of the Association of American Colleges and Universities. The team was charged with the goal of developing a plan to assist faculty in redesigning individual courses, as well as major and freestanding minor programs and the General Education program. The intensive seminar at the institute assisted the Ramapo team in developing strategies to align institutional purposes, structures and practices, as well as to advance and assess students’ learning outcomes. The Ramapo Greater Expectations attendees returned with recommendations to more fully integrate the college mission pillars into the curriculum and also produced a series of activities that centered on course design, including interactive and intentional learning, enhancing student engagement, and learning-centered education.

In 2006, a second team attended the Greater Expectations Institute program with two primary objectives: to evaluate the integration of General Education and higher-level academic programs and to create models of assessment to improve teaching and learning. The first step in this process was accomplished over the following year, when team members worked with convening groups to produce mission statements and learning outcomes for all majors and
freestanding minors. Additionally, institutional learning goals and outcomes were identified by the newly constituted Greater Expectations Task Force. These goals and outcomes were applied in identifying learning outcomes for college's General Education program.

The work of the Greater Expectations Institute teams and the Greater Expectations Task Force was vital to the Curriculum Enhancement Plan, which the college instituted in the fall of 2006. The transition to the new plan was assessed in 2008 by the vice-provost for Curriculum and Global Studies (Ecker Curriculum Enhancement Plan Report available in the Resource Room). The concluding report provided both qualitative and quantitative assessment data in various areas including syllabi, course sequencing, learning goals and objectives, as well as information relevant to the college's academic goals and mission (Curriculum Enhancement Plan Report available in the Resource Room).

A primary purpose of the Curriculum Enhancement Plan was to produce a more rigorous set of courses in the General Education program and to enhance connections with the college's professional programs. A further goal was the development of a curriculum plan that would continue to attract outstanding faculty and students to the institution. From its founding, Ramapo College has taken pride in being an excellent teaching institution. The four-course-per-semester teaching load, however, placed limitations on the amount of time that faculty could devote to more traditional forms of scholarship. A four-credit course system replaced the previous three-credit standard, thus reducing to 32 the total number of required courses. Courses now meet for a longer period of time and are more comprehensive and rigorous in nature.

THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS AT RAMAPO

Every major, minor, and other academic program at the college undergoes a five-year review, which includes a full self-study and an external evaluator. A report on assessment activities and subsequent plans for revisions to individual major programs is required in each self-study. To encourage faculty to take assessment seriously and to help faculty understand how to assess effectively, the review procedures for academic programs include the mandate to assess student learning. The convening group also examines the issue of connected learning, or the relationship between the structure of its curriculum and the missions of its school and the college. Every self-study describes the assessment procedures and reviews the learning outcomes of its program. Under the heading of “Goals and Objectives,” there are sets of questions pertaining to program/course outcomes, student outcomes, and curriculum/pedagogical outcomes. (See Review Procedures for Academic Programs in the Appendix.)

In addition, the convener of each major submits an annual report on its assessment activities to the school dean. In some schools, this report first goes to a Unit Assessment Committee. These reports are reviewed to ensure that program and course objectives are consistent with the college's mission and strategic plan, as well as the school's mission. The following discussion of the School of Social Science and Human Services (SSHS) will serve as one model of how this process unfolds.

The School of Social Science and Human Services has a Unit Assessment Committee that is designed to assist individual programs in developing their outcomes assessment procedures and to oversee the progress of each program. The committee also centralizes data collection for the school. Program conveners inform the Unit Assessment Committee of their plan and how it is linked to the college's strategic plan, as well as the college and school missions. Program reports include discussion of the mechanisms used to assess student learning. Each program is free to develop its own particular assessment protocol and a wide range of instruments is used throughout the college (see Figure 4). Assessment methodologies include pre/post tests, content exams, portfolios, field evaluations, alumni surveys and the like. The reports note the data that have been obtained to assess achievement of learning goals and what, if any, program changes have been made due to assessment.

The Unit Assessment Committee reviews the program reports and, in consultation with the faculty of each major program, makes a determination of the stage of development for each program’s assessment procedures (see Figure 4). Those development classifications range from Initial (the program has established an assessment plan but has not yet gathered data in a systematic manner) to Middle (the program has an established assessment
plan and gathered data but has not yet acted on its conclusions or is in the early stages of “closing the loop”) to Advanced (the program has a well-articulated assessment plan with a track record of instituting curricular changes in response to conclusions). The reports are sent to the respective deans for review and then forwarded to the Provost’s Office. Each dean summarizes his or her school’s assessment activities in the annual report. With small variations, this is the process in all schools. In cases where program reports are sent directly to the dean, he or she is to assume responsibility for evaluating the progress and status of each program.

PROGRESS TO DATE

In the School of Social Science and Human Services, the Unit Assessment Committee seeks to ensure that individual program objectives are as tightly linked to college and school missions as possible. The mission of SSHS is closely linked to the college mission. The school’s goals are twofold: 1) provide students with an understanding of human diversity, including the prevailing societal patterns that impede cultural reconciliation and insight, such as divisions based on race, gender, disability, social class, national origin and differing cultural backgrounds; and 2) to produce historically and socially informed graduates who are prepared to become actively engaged in civic institutions with a commitment to building a sustainable society in their respective communities.

The Social Science and Human Services core curriculum and specific courses of study are designed to provide students with intercultural understanding, interdisciplinary focus, and experiential learning. This educational process begins with two School Core courses, Social Issues and History of Social Thought, which are designed to provide grounding in these areas. Each of these courses has an interdisciplinary focus and provides a multicultural approach to the subject matter. These core courses, like courses in the various SSHS programs, have specific objectives that reflect these concerns. In addition, there are categorical core requirements, in the areas of Consciousness/Society and Sustainability, which reinforce the college’s mission. Each core course must have objectives that meet one or more of the following goals: civic engagement; mining diversity; historical grounding; sustainability; and understanding race, gender, and power.

Experiential Learning or Independent Study is required and provided to every student in the school. Each discipline in the school is expected to have program and individual course objectives that reflect some of these aspects. As an example, the core course Social Issues instituted pre-and post-testing beginning with the 2007-08 academic year. Data indicated that students demonstrated satisfactory understanding of issues related to race and class but maintained misconceptions of issues related to gender and gender orientation. As a result, the course has been revised to include greater attention to these issues (Social Issues Report available in the Resource Room).

The Unit Assessment Committee also Investigates the curricular changes that have been made as a result of assessment procedures in the major program. The SSHS results have varied with each program, depending on its stage of development. The externally accredited programs like Social Work and Teacher Education have well-developed assessment plans and clearly articulate the changes made in response to assessment in their accreditation documents. For example, through evaluation of their portfolio assessment process, the Teacher Education Program identified a need for greater attention to the areas of multicultural focus and special needs populations. Social Work noted that it had responded to outcomes assessment findings by including more content on the application of evidence-based practice in student “signature” assignments, as well as in field instructor workshops.

In their required five-year reviews and assessment reports, SSHS programs that are not externally accredited also indicate significant changes made as a result of assessment procedures. After reviewing its assessment instruments, the Psychology faculty determined it needed to introduce more biological content at an earlier point in the major, as well as provide better structure and more content on learning and perception. The Environmental Studies faculty also made significant curricular changes due to assessment: it added a requirement, Geographical Information Systems, to provide a methodological course with enhanced quantitative and technical skill development; added a requirement for study abroad or field study to ensure that students have cross-cultural and global experiences and the opportunity to conduct field observation; developed a World Sustainability course to ensure that students have a comprehensive introduction to sustainability within a global framework; and added a field lab to the Basic Ecology course to remediate insufficient field skills.
The Sociology program is in the process of instituting a number of changes as a result of its outcomes assessment process. These changes include: increased focus on teaching formal sociological writing; greater consistency in teaching basic theoretical arguments and their application to empirical phenomena; improvement in the articulation between the required fieldwork course and future career and graduate school goals; and improved preparation of students for employment and graduate school applications. Other majors, such as Africana Studies and Law and Society, are completing their initial stage of development, beginning to analyze outcomes assessment data and have yet to report curriculum changes (Sociology Report available in the Resource Room).

In the School of American and International Studies (AIS), assessment reports are sent directly to the school dean. AIS majors are closely linked to the school and college missions. For example, the American Studies major has program goals closely linked with interdisciplinary learning, critical thinking, experiential learning, intercultural and international education, and understanding of historical change. The AIS assessment plan has clearly articulated measurement tools for each program goal, with students tested at the 100 and 300 levels. While AIS is only in the second year of gathering data at the unit level, assessment and curriculum modifications have occurred at the program level for several years. For example, the AIS Literature major developed a matrix that identifies specific skills students should attain at the 100 and 400 levels and assesses outcomes through a review of randomly selected work at both levels (AIS Literature Report available in the Resource Room). The Liberal Studies major has three concentrations and tracks students’ achievement of learning goals in specific courses through a variety of methods, ranging from entry and exit surveys to textual analysis. The Spanish Language program has one of the most well-developed assessment procedures in AIS. The program uses American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Proficiency Guidelines and Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1999) as the foundation for its assessment plan. Specified levels of student achievement are measured over a three-year period.

MINI PROFILE

HISTORY

The History program has a well-developed assessment process, having conducted assessment from the 100 level to the 400 level of course work using rubrics, the random analysis of papers and pre- and post-testing to gather data. The History program is in the third year of collecting data and is making changes based on these results (History Report available in the Resource Room). For example, one finding had to due with the fact that students in the required 200 level Historiography class “did not always critically analyze the relationship between primary sources and historiography”. The History group decided to put greater emphasis in this course on emphasizing how “historiographical shifts are often tied to changes in how historians select and analyze primary sources” (2009), thus closing the loop. In addition, the creation of this 200 level course in Historiography emerged as a result of the first round of assessment in the major, (History Program Self-Study, 2005, available in the Resource Room), demonstrating again that assessment is a continuous process.

In the School of Theoretical and Applied Science (TAS), two faculty members have taken the responsibility for facilitating assessment work. These faculty members have attended Greater Expectations summer seminars on assessment, assisted convening groups in developing their assessment plans, and spearheaded efforts to collect and critique program assessment plans. All programs in TAS have well-articulated missions and goals related to the school and college.
MINI PROFILE

ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE

The Environmental Science program implements a multi-disciplinary approach in preparing students to meet the environmental challenges of the 21st century. The curriculum is heavily experiential in nature, with strong laboratory and fieldwork components in most courses. The goals and learning objectives of the major are organized into two groups: content-knowledge and skills (both technical and communication). All courses use the same set of rubrics for written assignments and oral presentations, adjusted for course level, and longitudinal tracking is employed across the curriculum. A 400-level field-research course and the capstone seminar serve as two major junctures for cumulative assessment. The faculty conduct ongoing curricular review, and since 2007 have instituted a new capstone seminar and a course in Environmental Science and Society. The longitudinal tracking process and capstone seminar identified weakness in students' communication skills. To address this weakness, in 2009 several lower-level courses designated class time to developing these skills.

Most TAS programs are in the early stages of gathering assessment data and some curricular changes have been implemented as a result of outcomes assessment. As one example, in 2007 the Biology program instituted changes based on assessment data. After determining that students were not performing well on plant biology questions in the SAT biology area test administered to a group of biology graduates, the program added more plant biology material to the Fundamentals of Biology course. Additionally, assessment data showed that students in the Evolution course were not consistently using the proper format for citations in their term papers. To remediate this, a special module on proper formatting of references, as well as many examples of reference formatting, has been added to the course. The Biology program reports that term papers in the Evolution course have greatly improved (Biology Report available in the Resource Room).

The TAS Computer Science program also used assessments to make several substantial changes. Analysis of data led to; greater emphasis on teaching Windows vs. Unix-based operating systems and programming; the introduction of .NET Environment for use in the major; a new course in financial modeling; and a broader incorporation of software design tools known as IDEs, or Integrated Design Environments, and source control tools in the software design course (Computer Science Report available in the Resource Room). In the mathematics program, student performance in General Education mathematics courses has been assessed and used to redesign and implement developmental courses. Student performance in the general education and the freshman and sophomore level Mathematics major courses is directly tied to the staffing and hours of the tutoring provided by the Center for Academic Success.

The TAS Nursing Program has a comprehensive assessment plan and has implemented a number of curricular changes as a result of outcomes review. In the BS program, the Nursing faculty found that juniors entering the Nursing sequence were weak in the math needed to administer medication. Based on results from the Tests of Essential Academic Skills given to these students, the Nursing faculty added an instructional module to their skills instruction and additional content to the second semester Pharmacology course. In 2006, based on low scores for the standardized content exam for the Pharmacology course, the course was re-designed and assigned to a different faculty member. Scores on the same exam in fall 2008 have risen to above the national benchmark. As part of a 2006 review of self-evaluations, master's degree graduates told the Nursing faculty that the program needed to better reflect the National League for Nursing Educator competencies. The 2007 evaluation tool and program outcomes were subsequently re-designed to reflect these professional standards. Self-evaluation results of 2007 were better aligned with professional practice (Nursing Report available in the Resource Room).

The School of Contemporary Arts (CA) strongly evidences the four pillars of the college's liberal arts mission. Inherently interdisciplinary in its structure and goals, each of the school's four major programs, Communication Arts, Music, Theater, and Visual Arts, has clear program goals and assessment strategies. Program goals and outcomes are structured by each major program to promote productive assessment and support the school's primary mission: to combine scholarly, creative, and practical studies to prepare students with the skills and knowledge to make
vital contributions to their disciplines, the arts, and contemporary global society. The school accomplishes this through interdisciplinary classroom studies, experiential studio work, scholarly projects, and diverse performance and production experiences. Assessment strategies have been customized to serve the wide range of learning environments, yielding information beneficial to individual program evaluation.

Linking closely with the college goal of providing an intercultural and experience-based education, Contemporary Arts students are challenged to explore, develop and apply new means of expression while engaging with both contemporary and established forms from multiple cultures and perspectives. The school provides extensive service and leadership opportunities for students through a combination of internships, field placements, community service, study abroad, and cooperative education. These opportunities supply culminating educational experiences that yield valuable external assessment, further individual student interests and career plans, and integrate and reinforce program goals.

Assessment strategies are designed, administered, and reviewed by the individual major programs. The strategies are supported by the dean of Contemporary Arts, who has headed Ramapo’s Greater Expectations Task Force since 2005. As a leader in providing faculty with assessment information, the dean encourages effective assessment practices in Contemporary Arts’ major programs and across the academic community. While the majority of the school’s programs are in the initial stage of assessment development, a progressive trend is evident. Convening groups in each of the major areas have implemented stronger assessment strategies, including capstone courses, portfolio requirements, pre- and post-testing, senior exhibitions, peer and outside reviewed performances, and internship evaluations.

The Visual Arts major requires a wide range of skills, acquired through art history, theory, and studio course work, all of which are taught with interdisciplinary, multicultural, and international perspectives. The Visual Arts program exemplifies the School of Contemporary Arts in its use of diverse assessment methodologies, ranging from content exams and evaluation of academic research presentations to extensive portfolio requirements and public exhibits (Visual Arts Report available in the Resource Room).

Communication Arts has developed a detailed set of program goals and outcomes and employs a three-year assessment cycle, with a specific plan for assessment each year. During the spring 2009 semester, Communication Arts is undergoing assessment of its 400-level capstone courses.

In fall of 2009, the Music program will initiate a four-year portfolio requirement. To better prepare students for the rapidly evolving global digital music marketplace, the program has strengthened the music core, requiring three additional courses: Music in Culture; Music, Technology and Media; and Musicianship II. To better assess all music majors, the Music program is instituting pre- and post-testing each semester in the newly redesigned Musicianship sequence. Music majors are required to make use of digital media, including shared spaces. Student portfolios include online posting of performances and compositions and academic writing that is evaluated by peers, program instructors, and outside professionals. Live performances, ranging from individual programs to large choral concerts, are assessed using a number of tools, including guest evaluators, juried competition, audience surveys, and both video and audio recording. All music students are required to complete at least one internship or co-op. These culminating experiences provide professional assessment for the individual student, as well as for use in evaluating program efficacy.
MINI PROFILE

MUSIC INTERNSHIPS

The Music internship program provides students with valuable opportunities to synthesize academic knowledge with experiential learning in a professional context. Music students have been placed at corporations such as Universal Music Group, Sony/BMG, Atlantic Records, Rolling Stone magazine and CNBC, as well as in a wide range of smaller and entrepreneurial environments. The internship experience provides a broad range of direct and indirect assessment methods, including problem-solving at the case-study level, collaborative projects, journaling, self-evaluation, and external review by professionals and peers. The Music program systematically uses the evaluations provided by supervisors to better prepare students for the internship experience, particularly in the areas of interpersonal dynamics, communication, and professional responsibility. Data obtained from regular communication with supervisors, together with information from participating students, is used to determine which internship placements are most productive, responsive, and conducive to student learning. In the creative industries, the nurturing of people skills and networking are vital and many music students use the internship experience to secure professional positions.

The Theater program has undertaken several modes of assessment since the fall of 2007, amending many courses to fit more obviously with program goals. A new focus on writing skills and critical thinking has compelled Theater to add an additional required capstone course, Issues in Contemporary Theater, which complements the more practical course, Advanced Projects. The Theater program uses rubrics for assignments in every required course in order to clearly assess student achievement of program goals. Each of the Theater concentrations has been revised to more clearly fulfill the learning goals of the program, as well as the school and college missions. The Theater program has also begun a formalized external peer review of student productions and has created an alumni group that serves to keep track of the progress of graduates and provide current students and alumni with networking opportunities for career development. Video and audio resources are used throughout Contemporary Arts, providing both current and archival information for program evaluation.

In the Anisfield School of Business (ASB), the assessment process is well articulated and functioning at an advanced level. The core curriculum of the business program is managed by the Teaching, Assessment and Program Committee (TAP) in coordination with the convening groups representing each business discipline.

MINI PROFILE

THE ANISFIELD SCHOOL OF BUSINESS ASSESSMENT MODEL

The Anisfield School of Business (ASB) exemplifies assessment practices that are well designed, consistently executed, and functioning at a high level across major disciplines and course offerings. Central to their assessment plan is the Teaching, Assessment, and Program Committee (TAP), which works with the convening groups to ensure that ASB’s seven learning goals are rigorously applied in each business discipline. All seven learning goals were first assessed in 2007-08 and again in 2008-09. Subsequently, each learning goal will be assessed every other year. Objectivity and customization are strengths of the ASB program; the TAP committee coordinates with instructors to select effective instruments to assess the learning goals in each course. As a key strength, the assessment data are reviewed by the entire faculty at bi-annual assessment retreats where they objectively evaluate the assessment methodology and the data. The faculty then make recommendations specifically focused on improved achievement of the learning goals rather than targeting individual instructors’ pedagogical practices.

ASB’S SEVEN LEARNING GOALS

1. ORAL COMMUNICATION: Our students will deliver well-prepared oral presentations, using appropriate current technology.

2. WRITTEN COMMUNICATION: Our students will compose well-written business documents, using appropriate current technology.
3. ETHICS: Our students will consider the moral implications of business actions and processes, and propose ethically sound solutions.

4. FOUNDATION: Our students will comprehend principles and practices in key business disciplines.

5. INTEGRATION: Our students will conduct interdisciplinary analysis of business cases or economic issues.

6. PERSPECTIVES: Our students will recognize international and multi-cultural viewpoints.

7. REASONING: Our students will be critical thinkers and decision-makers able to use qualitative and quantitative methods.

The Assessment Subcommittee of the TAP committee is charged with managing the evaluation process of ASB’s learning goals. Two overriding principles govern the assessment process: 1) evaluation of the assessment instrument or protocol will not involve the instructor of the course, and 2) recommendations are meant to improve the attainment of stated learning goals and not to evaluate the pedagogical effectiveness of individual instructors.

The TAP committee, in consultation with faculty other than the course instructor, chooses the specific instrument, protocol, or other means to assess the learning goal. The chair of the TAP assessment subcommittee then contacts and coordinates the engagement of external reviewers, typically, other ASB faculty, of the instruments. After the assessment instrument is administered, the convener facilitates its transmittal to external reviewers; at this juncture, the ASB office staff may also participate in relevant activities, such as photocopying exam answers, to expedite the review process.

The chair then provides the external reviewers with the appropriate rubric that will be applied to the assessment instrument and holds an inter-rater reliability session to ensure consistency in evaluation. Once the reviewers have completed their work, the graded rubrics are forwarded to the TAP member who is responsible for compiling and producing a summary report of the raw data. The TAP committee then reviews the summary report and presents the results to the faculty along with recommendations to close any gaps. The full ASB faculty discusses the results at in-service assessment retreats and develops proposals to incorporate the recommendations. To date, assessment data have led to greater curricular emphasis on oral communication skills; the formation of a committee to develop a Business Writing Across the Curriculum program to adequately address the written communication learning objective within the core curriculum of ASB; an infusion of an ethical decision-making model in more business courses; greater attention to global analysis in the introductory Perspectives course; and greater attention to multidisciplinary analysis in the advanced marketing courses.

The Anisfield School of Business has outlined its detailed structure assessment process in its ASB Assurance of Learning Process document (available in the Resource Room).

**CONCLUDING DATA**

The assessment of student learning at Ramapo College has made significant and demonstrable progress since the last Middle States accreditation. In addition to the narrative provided, graphic representation of data collected is demonstrated in the charts provided on the following pages.
All Ramapo College course syllabi are required to meet standards established by the Academic Review Committee, including the statement of learning objectives. In 2009, a random sampling of 350 course syllabi showed that 98.6% included course objectives.

**FIGURE 2**
**PERCENTAGE OF COURSES WITH LEARNING OBJECTIVES – 2009**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Courses in Sample</th>
<th>350</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Syllabi with Course Objectives</td>
<td>98.6%</td>
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</table>

A large sample of 510 courses yielded the following information regarding the relationship of course objectives to the mission statements of the college, the schools, and program goals.

**FIGURE 3**
**COURSE OBJECTIVES LINKED TO MISSIONS AND GOALS – 2009**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SYLLABUS INCLUDES AT LEAST ONE COURSE OBJECTIVE RELATED TO THE CATEGORY</th>
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<td>510 Courses Surveyed</td>
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The college has identified four primary areas for promoting continued growth in assessment practice across the academic community:

- Provide ongoing support to faculty and programs for the development of strong assessment methodology.
- Assist programs in shift from initial to middle and advanced stages of assessment.
- Monitor assessment progress at all levels.
- Increase centralization and accessibility of assessment data.
# Figure 4

## ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY BY SCHOOL AND COURSE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School/Program Majors &amp; Grad Programs</th>
<th>Assessment Plan</th>
<th>Link to the College Mission/SP</th>
<th>Pre/Post Tests</th>
<th>Content Exams</th>
<th>Portfolios</th>
<th>Performances Internship Evaluations /Exhibitions</th>
<th>Key/ Capstone Course/ Assignment</th>
<th>Exit, Alumni, Employer Surveys</th>
<th>Centralized Data Collection</th>
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FINDINGS OF THE SELF-STUDY

ACHIEVEMENTS

• Implementation of Curriculum Enhancement Plan
• Development of new graduate programs and a new honors program
• Implementation of new General Education program
• Development of more integrated co-curricular programming in the Office of Student Development
• College-wide implementation of assessment activities
• Successful program accreditations
• Creation of the new position of vice provost for curriculum and assessment

CHALLENGES

• Integration of assessment activities college-wide
• Ongoing administration and assessment of the General Education program
• The process for development and review of new program proposals, including those that are non-degree bearing, to ensure alignment with mission.

RECOMMENDATIONS

• Complete a comprehensive plan for the assessment of General Education.
• Fully implement recently purchased assessment software (WEAVEonline).
• Make permanent the Office of Assessment to house an assessment library and to provide tools and resources for both faculty and staff.
• Develop a plan and process for creating new graduate programs that address issues such as impact on undergraduate education, integration of liberal arts and professional studies, and alignment with mission.
• Create a Web site for General Education that lists goals, requirements, and other relevant information that students can access.
• Create a Web site for assessment so that all academic assessment activities can be posted and shared.