

Charge for the Task Force on Academic Excellence and Engagement

Background

The Ramapo College Strategic Plan 2012-2018 put forward a revised mission for the College:

Ramapo College is New Jersey's Public Liberal Arts College, dedicated to providing students a strong foundation for a lifetime of achievement. The College is committed to academic excellence through interdisciplinary and experiential learning, and international and intercultural understanding. Ramapo College emphasizes teaching and individual attention to all students. We promote diversity, inclusiveness, sustainability, student engagement, and community involvement.

and continued the existing vision from the previous strategic plan:

As the region's premier public liberal arts college, Ramapo College of New Jersey prepares students to be successful leaders for a changing world through its distinctive commitments to hands-on learning and faculty-student mentoring.

As indicated in the mission, the state of New Jersey has designated Ramapo College as New Jersey's Public Liberal Arts College. The Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC), of which Ramapo is a founding member, describes public liberal arts colleges as being, "Dedicated to the advancement of high-quality, public liberal arts education in a student-centered, residential environment." and supplements that description with the following:

In an era of escalating costs for higher education, COPLAC institutions combine an egalitarian concern for access with academic rigor. The mission is not just to provide higher education for students who otherwise could not afford it, but a high quality liberal arts education commensurate with that offered by North America's finest private colleges.

The challenge of providing a high quality liberal education at a public institution became more apparent with the release of the report from the President's Task Force on Financial Sustainability. This report outlined the existing structural deficit within the College's finances and offering potential tactics for eliminating this structural deficit including standards for faculty credit hour generation. Additionally, a recommendation was made to examine a move to three credit courses with a 120 credit hour requirement for graduation. The recommendation was not based on the estimation of a large financial savings but looked rather at other issues impacting academic excellence and academic engagement..

Charge

The Task Force on Academic Excellence and Engagement is charged with developing a white paper that puts forward a viable, integrated solution to the following:

- Accreditation issues caused by the CEC;
- Transfer credit issues related to our practice of accepting three credit courses as equivalents to four credit courses;
- The revenue (or lack of revenue) issue created by the current work-load given to science faculty who teach labs;
- The perceived inequities in current (and potentially future) teaching loads;
- Scheduling and space issues created by one and two day a week classes;
- Appropriateness of class scheduling for facilitation of student learning, particularly in 100 and 200 level courses;
- The perception of low academic rigor and lack of flexibility within the curriculum;
- The low level of academic engagement demonstrated by our students.

Timeline

The task force will meet across the Fall 2014 semester. The white paper will be presented to the Provost by January 2015.

Members:

CA:	Ruma Sen
TAS:	Eric Karlin
SSHS:	Kristin Kenneavy
ASB:	Jason Hecht
SSHGS:	Lisa Cassidy
Liaison to FAEC:	Roark Atkinson

Data to be collected:

1. **Accreditation and concerns surrounding the CEC.**
2. **Student Performance on CEC (if approved by FAEC).**
3. **Potential schedule for 3, for 4, for 3 and 4 credit courses.**
4. **Graduation rates 2004 to 2014.**
5. **First to second year retention rates from 2004 to 2014.**
6. **Students graduating with at least one minor and or a double major 2004 to 2014.**
7. Rate of double majoring and/or minoring at peer institutions. – **In process**
8. **Opportunity to double major or minor (by program and/or school).**
 - **Free credits available within the major program**
9. **Patterns of GPA 2004 vs 2014:**
 - **Graduating GPA and Semester GPA**
10. Student success in 3 credits vs 4 credits (from NSSE and Graduating Senior Survey; Clearinghouse data).
 - Perception of challenge
 - Perception of preparation
 - Attendance rates for graduate and professional schools
11. Changes in instruction cost over time; (IPEDS)
 - vs peers ???
12. **Number of courses in a major/Size of majors.**
13. Faculty effectiveness:
 - Pre vs post syllabi (more exams, learning experiences, breadth and depth) – **In process**
 - **Feedback from students**
 - Preparation time (Heri Survey)
 - **Independent studies – increased or decreased.**