

Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students

of

MIDDLESEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Bedford , Massachusetts

by

An Evaluation Team representing the
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
of the
New England Association of Schools and Colleges

Prepared after study of the institution's
self-evaluation report and a visit to
November 2 – 5, 2014

The members of the team:

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This report represents the views of the evaluation committee as interpreted by the chairperson. Its content is based on the committee's evaluation of the institution with respect to the Commission's criteria for accreditation. It is a confidential document in which all comments are made in good faith. The report is prepared both as an educational service to the institution and to assist the Commission in making a decision about the institution's accreditation status.

COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION New England Association of Schools and College

Preface Page to the Team Report

Please complete during the team visit and include with the report prepared by the visiting team

Date form completed: 11/3/2014

Name of Institution Middlesex Community College (MA)

1. History Year chartered or authorized 1968 Year first degrees awarded 1970

2. Type of control: State City Other; specify: _____
 Private, not-for-profit Religious Group; specify: _____
 Proprietary Other; specify: _____

3. Degree level:
 Associate Baccalaureate Masters Professional Doctorate

4. Enrollment in Degree Programs (Use figures from fall semester of most recent year):

| | Full-time | Part-time | FTE | Retention ^a | Graduation ^b | # Degrees ^c |
|---------------|-----------|-----------|------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Associate | 3619 | 6083 | 5778 | 62.5 | 12.7 | 1358 |
| Baccalaureate | | | | | | |
| Graduate | | | | | | |

(a) full-time 1st to 2nd year (b) 3 or 6 year graduation rate (c) no. of degrees awarded most recent year

5. Number of current faculty: Full time 133 Part-time 439 FTE: _____

6. Current fund data for most recently completed fiscal year: (Specify year: FY'2014)

(Double click in any cell to enter spreadsheet. Enter dollars in millions; e.g., \$1,456,200 = \$1.456)

Revenues

| | |
|------------------------|--------|
| Tuition | \$21.4 |
| Gov't Appropriations | \$26.2 |
| Gifts/Grants/Endowment | \$24.4 |
| Auxiliary Enterprises | \$0.4 |
| Other | \$3.1 |
| Total | \$75.5 |

Expenditures

| | |
|-----------------------|--------|
| Instruction | \$28.3 |
| Research | \$0.0 |
| General | \$45.3 |
| Auxiliary Enterprises | \$0.0 |
| Other | \$0.0 |
| Total | \$73.6 |

7. Number of off-campus locations: **None**

In-state _____ Other U.S. _____ International _____ Total _____

8. Number of degrees and certificates offered electronically:

Programs offered entirely on-line 16 Programs offered 50-99% on-line 35

9. Is instruction offered through a contractual relationship?

No Yes; specify program(s): _____

10. Other characteristics:

INTRODUCTION

A Comprehensive Evaluation of Middlesex Community College (MCC) in Fall 2014 was conducted by an eight-member team on behalf of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. Team members received the thorough, 171 page, College's Accreditation Self-Study about six-weeks prior to the visit. The College also provided a catalog to each member and unlimited access to an extensive Digital Workroom, that housed scores of pertinent documents. Members of the team also reviewed the College's website and social media sites.

During the November 2 -5, 2014 visit, team members reviewed additional documents, such as course syllabi and Fact Book, and met with a wide representation of the College community, including members of the Board of Trustees, Senior Officers, union leaders, faculty, staff, and students, and members of the outside community. The meetings were frank and collegial in addressing team members' questions and concerns; suggestions were openly and positively received. The entire team visited both the Bedford and Lowell campuses, meeting with personnel and students and touring many of the College's facilities.

The Team Chair provided an exit report at the conclusion of the visit that highlighted the team's delineation of MCC major strengths and areas of concerns. The Team is confident that the feedback from NEASC and the lessons learned from its extensive self-examination will continue to position Middlesex Community College for a successful future.

NARRATIVE:

Standard 1: Mission and Purposes

Middlesex Community College (MCC) is a comprehensive community college that is part of a larger Massachusetts Community College System. Although the Board of Higher Education defines the mission of community colleges, MCC has crafted a strong mission statement that addresses the unique needs of the communities it serves. Key components of the statement are: access, equity, and inclusion; innovation and creativity; and collaborative approaches. It is clear that MCC's Mission Statement guides its activities.

The college's mission retains its relevance through periodic review and revision, the last occurring in 2011, which involved over 300 college employees. However evidence of the involvement of the external community in the revision process, particularly given MCC's strong role as a community college, was not apparent.

The Mission Statement is widely distributed through programs, print, electronic approaches including social media, and is posted in public spaces around the campuses. The college periodically assesses its effectiveness in ensuring that all constituents understand the organization's mission and purposes. Almost 90% of faculty and staff are aware of the Mission Statement and results from the 2012 Personal Assessment of the college Environment Survey (PACE) reveal that MCC faculty and staff exceed the national average in several measures relating to the use of the statement in their own work areas.

The implementation of the Mission Statement is evident through its use in a variety of important activities, such as divisional planning, budgeting, and program review. It is clear that it is a constant guide to MCC. The college understands that publicizing and deploying the mission is an ongoing activity.

Institutional Effectiveness:

MCC clearly re-evaluates and revises its mission statement periodically. It uses a variety of nationally normed and internal surveys to collect data and set benchmarks. These exercises result in revisions to a statement that enhances the college's effectiveness.

Standard 2: Planning & Evaluation

Planning:

Based on a review of the self-study and other documents, and confirmed by meetings with MCC administrators, staff, and faculty, it is clear that the College's planning activities are systematic, comprehensive, integrated, broad-based and appropriate to its mission and goals. Since the last reaccreditation visit, MCC has developed and implemented three (3) strategic plans, each 3-4 years in duration, and is currently formulating its new plan. The goals of the current strategic plan are appropriately oriented toward the college's mission and student success, and are aligned with external (e.g., statewide) mandates and requirements. For its longer term planning, the college has made extensive use of the 2007 Master Plan developed by the architectural firm Sasaki Associates to guide its planning for space and facilities. More recently, the college conducted a wide-ranging environmental scan in 2012-2013 that it currently uses for both strategic and operational planning. The college also uses institution-wide data from such sources as the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) and PACE to inform its planning and evaluation efforts.

MCC dedicates significant institutional resources to planning and evaluation efforts, and has oriented this work toward student success and service. The college has an identified office of Institutional Research within its Enrollment Management, Research and Planning department, and has recently hired additional staff. Given the dramatically increased needs for data across the institution, additional IR staff may need to be considered. However, IR functions have been spread across the institution, as individual departments are engaged in varying degrees in collecting, analyzing and interpreting relevant data. Some, but not all, offices have developed strategic plans for their units. The Library and Technology Services could provide a model for other areas.

The college has also engaged in multiple levels of emergency planning, including a campus-wide "active shooter" scenarios in conjunction with local authorities. While several constituent groups expressed feeling safe on the campus, the faculty and staff expressed that additional and ongoing emergency planning and training would be beneficial for the College.

Every major office engages in annual operational planning once the budget is allocated, and institutional operational planning is informed by both enrollment and financial projections provided by Institutional Research and Finance, respectively. The Team commends the college for its use of these projections in establishing budget priorities, particularly the operation of its Enrollment Planning Committee. This Committee is composed of faculty and staff from most of the college's functional groups that impact student recruitment, admissions, registration, retention, and completion, as well as the Marketing/Communications area. In addition to enhancing the quality and value of the projections provided for planning activities, the Enrollment Planning Committee has recommended and/or implemented several initiatives designed to enhance student enrollment and retention to completion. MCC encourages broad-based and inclusive participation in planning from all of its stakeholders. This is a major strength of the College. In particular, the most recent (and currently expiring) strategic plan adopted an Appreciative Inquiry approach designed to

substantially increase the entire college community's engagement with the strategic process. The college's PACE results indicate that almost 49% of responding faculty and 56.2% of responding staff members participated in some aspect of strategic planning, and more than 70% of both groups reported that they believed their voices had been heard. There is substantial evidence that operational planning at the college also relies on broad-based participation from across the college community. As part of the college's annual budget planning cycle, the members of the executive leadership—including the areas of Academic & Student Affairs, Administration & Finance, Enrollment Management/Research/Planning, and Facilities—collect and synthesize information from their various units, establish priorities in consultation with their respective leadership teams, and then work with each other to establish the college's priorities and activities for the next year. The Board of Trustees has recently assumed a more active role in the college's planning processes, as evidenced by BOT members serving on committees aligned with the college's strategic directions, and vice-presidents making presentations to the board on their functions, activities, and priorities.

Evaluation:

The college's strategic directions are oriented toward successful student outcomes and substantial evidence exists that the college subsequently oriented its activities toward achieving the strategic directions. For example, review of the Academic and Student Affairs annual "Strategic Directions" summaries clearly document that the activities of each department are consistent with the strategic goals of the college. While neither the current strategic plan nor these summaries specify baselines, benchmarks of progress or specific outcomes, the executive team, deans, faculty and staff described numerous and substantive ways that the college is using data to inform subsequent planning, activity, and resource allocation.

MCC engages in regular academic program review. These reviews generate 5-year action plans that serve as the basis for future departmental planning and activity. Progress on these plans is reviewed annually. MCC is, however, at the beginning stages of assessing the effectiveness of its non-academic offices and functions. Four (4) departments—Admissions, Advising, Enrollment Communications, and Institutional Research—recently completed reviews of their operations, and the college is organizing itself for all offices and functions to do the same. The Enrollment Management, Research and Planning department is taking a leadership role in assisting offices in developing their own departmental mission statements, and identifying and assessing their performance. Given the importance of these functions for enhancing *student experience outside the classroom*, these assessments will be critical to the college's efforts to increase student persistence, attainment, and personal and civic development.

MCC is diligent about using verifiable information to inform itself and the larger community about students' learning and success, and the overall health and strength of the institution. The College annually publishes a comprehensive fact book that includes information on its student demographics, some student success outcomes (e.g., graduation, licensure pass rates), as well

substantial information on the college's programs and services, and budget trends for four previous academic years.

Institutional Effectiveness:

The college exhibits commitment to allocating personnel, financial, and temporal resources to systemically assess its planning and evaluation processes. The executive team has described the college's current strategic plan as "aspirational"-- one designed specifically to encourage widespread engagement and participation, but not to stipulate the specific activities of departments.

Consequently, departments have largely embraced operationalizing the plan themselves. While this has deepened their engagement in the planning process, the lack of specificity is likely contributing to the college's difficulties in establishing and communicating linkages between all the activities (including pursuing grant funding) and contributing to the "initiative fatigue" expressed in the self-study and at several meetings with college constituents. The College has clearly engaged in reflection on what is needed in the next strategic plan, and is committed to organizing itself and allocating personnel, financial, and temporal resources to systemically assess its planning and evaluative processes.

Standard 3: Organization and Governance

As one of the fifteen Massachusetts community colleges, MCC is organized to promote the goals of the system as well as the local priorities prescribed in the College's Mission Statement. The College has aligned its organization and governance structures to achieve its mission, institutional values, and accepted practices validated by the Board of Higher Education.

The Board of Trustees, which oversees both the Bedford and Lowell Campuses, is comprised of ten voting members appointed under Massachusetts General Law by the Governor. A student representative constitutes an eleventh member and is selected by the student-body. The latter slot assures the student perspective in decision-making. MCC has structured its Board of Trustees to align with Section 22 of Massachusetts General Laws. The Board is empowered to operate the College as it sees fit with regard to a wide variety of areas, such as hiring and evaluation of the President, approving the Mission, setting of fees, approval of the curriculum, and development of personnel policies. Many of the activities articulated in Section 22 of Massachusetts General Laws are delegated to the President, who is hired and evaluated by the Board.

Under its current Chair, the Board committees have been re-structured to reflect more systemic attention to matters of diversity, student success, and institutional planning and accountability. Additionally, the Board conducted its first self-evaluation to determine its effectiveness in fulfilling its responsibilities, including overseeing the alignment of the institutional mission and strategic plan, monitoring fiscal effectiveness, and adequately overseeing educational programs. The new and expanded areas of Board responsibility and oversight demonstrate that assessment has begun to determine what new initiatives and functions are needed. Board actions are widely disseminated.

Although the Board has recently become more effective in carrying out its responsibilities as articulated in the Section 22 of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts General Laws, it needs to exercise caution that it does not blur the line between developing policy and implementing policies which the development of Board By-Laws that codify the scope of its activities, including regular self-evaluations, conduct of meetings, operation of committees, and interactions with College staff could help to ensure.

The organizational structure of the College is configured to promote its mission-centered, student-focused operational processes. All senior officers, including the chief academic officer, report to the President. The organization fosters a system of open and ongoing communication that is threaded through all levels of the organization, beginning with the President. Further, faculty, staff and students have many opportunities to participate in College governance. For example, faculty and professional staff engage in regular program, department, and division meetings, program review, assessment of student learning and deliberations on new curricula and programming. The College provides ongoing avenues to communicate effectively to its internal and external constituencies, using its redesigned website, its new smart-phone/mobile device app, and social media. The College should continue its efforts to solicit feedback from students on a regular basis to ensure that it is meeting their needs.

Collective bargaining is an important component of MCC's governance. At the State level, the Massachusetts Community College Council, established through the collective bargaining agreement negotiated by the Board of Higher Education, maintains monthly meetings where matters relating to conditions of employment are discussed. At the local level, The Faculty and Staff Association

(FSA), coupled with the Student Union Government Association (SUGA) constitute parallel organizations that facilitate and insure that the voices of faculty, staff, and students are part of the governance process. The FSA acts as the structural conduit to the three central academic committees: Curriculum Committee, Academic Standards, and the General Education Committee. All actions from these three committees move to FSA for approval before being presented to the Provost/VP and the President for final approval. As a result, MCC has an inclusive governance structure designed to provide all constituents with the opportunity to participate in important issues.

Over the past five years, the FSA's effectiveness has been assessed to better improve communication among its executive board and members of the various sub-committees. Two noteworthy changes resulted: rescheduling the election of FSA committee chairs from September to the end of the previous school year in May, and revising the eligibility criteria for FSA officers—excluding the President and all upper level administrators above Assistant Deans.

The College has been proactive in reviewing its structure to ensure that it is positioning itself to achieve its mission and goals. In 2011, five academic divisions were consolidated into three (Business, Education and Public Service; Health and STEM; and Humanities and Social Sciences), and an additional reorganization occurred in August 2014, when the Division of Health and STEM was reorganized into two separate divisions: STEM; and a new division of Nursing and Allied Health. These structural changes suggest that the College understands the importance of adopting an effective Academic Affairs structure that will allow it to successfully deploy its faculty, curriculum, and student learning outcome reviews.

The College's integration of student and academic affairs under a Provost appears to successfully integrate and coordinate processes that facilitate student success. While some have questioned the placement of Financial Aid in the Division of Administration and Finance, and Admissions in the Division of Enrollment Management, Research, and Planning, the rationale for the structure is sound and both appear to be functioning effectively. The faculty, in conjunction with the academic affairs administrators, are charged with assuring academic integrity and play a large role in the development and evaluation of academic programs.

A significant number of MCC faculty and staff express high levels of confidence in the institution's governance structure as evidenced in surveys of employee engagement. The PACE survey confirms that they feel that they have a say in important matters. The faculty, in particular, are provided with a major role in assuring academic integrity and other issues relating to the academic program. However, two important issues have emerged: First, a need for more effective communication, particularly with and among part-time faculty who provide a large percentage of the academic program, and the need for new administrative positions because of heavy workloads.

The College continues to assess the effectiveness of its communication with the institution's stakeholders. Given the high number of part-time faculty, the College is taking further steps to improve engagement and participation of these members of the college community.

Institutional Effectiveness:

The institution periodically reviews its organizational structure and governance systems to ensure their effectiveness. It utilizes evidence-based approaches, using student learning outcomes data, program reviews, and personnel evaluations. These activities characterize an empowered community

where all constituencies on both campuses engage in practices that result in ever-evolving organizational and governance structures.

Standard 4: The Academic Program

MCC offers a diverse range of academic programs meant to address the evolving educational needs of students and the communities it serves. Beginning in 2010, the college began work on aligning its mission and vision with that of the State of Massachusetts' "Vision Project." This new initiative set benchmarks for student learning outcomes assessment. The seven benchmarks help MCC to better understand the effectiveness of its academic programs and services through regular assessment and evaluation. These measures and formulas will be used to help direct future planning and State funding will be partially driven by each college's effectiveness in each of these measures.

The College has addressed increased college access through high school partnerships, dual enrollment programs, self-paced flexible studies, and online learning in courses, certificates, and degrees. Student completion rates, already an operational focus at the college, are now being mandated by the State. Workforce initiatives are also being benchmarked for future planning and support by the State. Ongoing use of these assessment approaches will ensure data-based planning and improvement of the institution, its programs, and ultimately, student learning experiences, across all modes of instruction.

In keeping with its mission, MCC offers 56 associate degrees and 24 certificate programs. Of these, 11 degrees and 5 certificates can be achieved fully online; 38 programs can be pursued with at least 50% of coursework online. These degree programs provide students with a range of learning opportunities in general studies and more concentrated study of a particular field. A range of courses in the social sciences and humanities can be taken as part of a "flexible studies" program, which provide students with access to learning experiences at their own pace, through a variety of modes of course delivery. To further increase access to college-level learning, MCC has signed agreements with twelve area high schools, which permit students to dually enroll in college courses, allowing them to graduate with transcribed college credits. The College has also established workforce partnerships with local businesses, to offer both non-credit and credit courses for their employees.

In addition to these college-level offerings, MCC has also put in place measures to assess and to provide resources to improve the college readiness of graduating high school students. Early Accuplacer testing is offered to local high school sophomores and juniors to assess their preparedness for college, so they can remediate their basic skills prior to graduation. Students at MCC can accelerate completion of developmental math (RAMP-Up program) and English-writing (ALP program), using recent scholarship that shows the effectiveness of this approach in enhancing student retention and eventual success.

Oversight of the academic program is conducted via an institutional structure involving the Provost/Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs, an Associate Provost, Academic Deans, and Assistant Deans. Faculty play key roles, in designing, approving, delivering and assessing courses and programs through participation in the Faculty and Staff Association (FSA). Faculty also serve on at least three college committees (Academic Standards, General Education, and Curriculum committees) that review, revise, and approve academic courses, programs and policies, in collaboration with the Provost and respective Deans.

MCC's commitment to effective, data-informed review and assessment of the academic program is evident in many places, projects, roles, and processes throughout the college. A full-time Dean of

Assessment is responsible for developing and implementing programs and processes to engage faculty in college-wide student learning assessment, including involvement in integrating institutional student learning outcomes (ISLOs) within the general education curriculum, and assesses for those outcomes in the courses where they have been formally identified and approved by faculty. To enhance their understanding and implementation of learning assessment, MCC provides professional development resources and experiences to the college's 125 full-time and 439 part-time faculty.

MCC understands the need for regular and consistent institution-wide assessment of student learning through the ISLO/general education framework. Faculty and administrators alike have expressed the challenge in the multi-faceted nature of this "culture change" process. The number of faculty needing to be trained in the understanding and implementation of consistent learning assessment puts a strain on the institution, but, nonetheless, the institution persists in its commitment.

In general, learning objectives for all courses and programs are established by faculty who are experts in their disciplines (or implemented by faculty according to the requirements of external accreditors). ISLO's have been mapped to general education courses, and requirements are subsequently delineated for students to enroll in a sufficient selection of courses covering a specified number and distribution of these outcomes. This framework has been put in place under a statewide initiative to provide smooth and consistent transfer between two and four year institutions, while assuring assessment of student learning is based on the specified outcomes. The implementation of this program has been carried out primarily by faculty, working through the various curriculum and general education committees of the college, with the assistance of the Dean of Academic Assessment. The approach attempts to develop a consistent framework and approach for regular definition and assessment of student learning outcomes.

Through this systematic definition of institutional student learning outcomes and the mapping to the general education curriculum, the college is creating a framework within which the coherence, sequences, and transferability of courses and programs is made explicit and clear. This coherence is likewise establishing a framework for improvement in the development of early learning support toward college readiness, the efficient and appropriate definition of program expectations, and the articulation of programs with receiving institutions. Advisors can now use this framework to assist students in course and program choices wherever they are in their learning pathway.

To facilitate the assessment of course-level learning outcomes and to ensure students have an equivalent learning experience particularly when multiple sections of the same course are offered, consistent learning expectations need to be developed and communicated to students. A review of course syllabi however, and discussion with faculty and administrators, has shown that such consistency and clarity has not yet been achieved. Differences in basic course descriptions, as well as a lack of consistent statements about expected learning outcomes even between sections of the same courses, have alerted the team to several barriers (including faculty contract specifications about syllabi) preventing the full, consistent implementation of this framework. College administration is aware of this problem and is approaching it as part of the challenge of ongoing improvement of the learning assessment at MCC.

The College also faces and recognizes two other significant challenges as it continues to implement the many facets of its course, program, and student learning assessment. Regarding student learning,

faculty and staff have found the process of gathering consistent and broad evidence of student learning to be a difficult task. To address this concern, staff and faculty are seeking appropriate data management tools that may streamline the process. The College also continues to explore ways of ensuring that its many instructional faculty (both part- and full-time) are adequately and consistently engaged in its multi-faceted “culture of assessment.” While those implementing this process recognize that this cannot be accomplished quickly, they have also acknowledged, both in the College self-study and in discussions with the visiting team, that the degree of faculty engagement calls for continued and creative efforts toward improvement.

Collegiate level reading and writing have been a key focus of improvement efforts at the College. Various efforts have been instituted to gauge college readiness of high school students and to provide remediation, if necessary, before they enter MCC. Accelerated developmental programs in reading, writing, and math have also been developed to further enhance student success in these areas. Evidence from earlier iterations of learning assessment efforts has led the college to develop a new approach to embedding learning outcomes for writing in particular in multiple places in a student’s learning pathway.

Online learning is the primary mode of distance learning at the college. About 15% of MCC enrollment is derived from online courses, with 177 sections offered in Fall, 2014. The Vice Provost for Instruction and Advising, the e-Learning Manager, and the Division Deans meet annually to review the online program, determine what courses or sections are priorities for future development, and determine which programs should be targeted to be offered 100% online.

As with on-campus courses (excluding a small number of programs such as Early Childhood Education, Criminal Justice, math and allied health), instructors of online courses appear to follow their own course objectives. However, a review of syllabi, including readings, types of assignments, and grading criteria, suggest that online courses adhere to the same credit hour standard as campus courses.

Faculty teaching online courses are required to take an 8-week on-campus course that focuses on both the effective use of technology and best pedagogical practices. The development of a substantial draft of a new course is an outcome of the training. As an incentive to develop online courses, faculty receive a stipend of \$1,000 to participate in the training and \$1,500 (contractually guaranteed in both units) to fully develop an online course. To date, 200 online courses have been developed. The E-Learning Coordinator is the primary support for instructional design, but faculty teaching online for the first time are also supported by faculty mentors who also receive a stipend.

Although it has been several years since the college specifically reviewed the entire distance learning program, substantial evidence indicates that the effectiveness of the program is assessed on a routine basis. New courses are reviewed by the e-Learning Manager before they go live, and online sections are routinely included in artifact collection for purposes of assessing student learning outcomes. For example, as part of the college’s efforts to assess the quantitative literacy ISLO this fall, eight online courses contributed student artifacts as part of a representative sampling of 51 courses.

The college regularly analyzes student completion rates (which are comparable to campus-based classes) and reviews help desk call statistics generated by Blackboard to review trends in student and faculty technical questions or problems. In the recent past, the Technology Committee evaluated the Blackboard platform, looked at other options, and decided to stay with Blackboard.

Institutional Effectiveness:

The multi-faceted efforts of the college to develop and assess its academic program reflect a long-term and deep commitment to culture change that is now being aligned with benchmarks of the Massachusetts Vision Project and related “Mass Transfer” program for higher education. While the College recognizes this as labor intensive, time consuming, and often incremental, it continues to reflect a commitment to this process with an informed understanding of the need for steady persistence, as well as the growing value resulting from its maturing and unfolding continuous improvement efforts.

The November 17, 2009 CIHE letter requested that MCC “provide a full explanation of what it has learned as it completes a full round of program reviews.” The College has provided specific examples in how it integrates this information in program improvement in the areas of developmental math, and in the nursing and criminal justice programs.

Standard 5: Faculty

MCC has a well-qualified and energetic core of 134 full-time faculty (2013-14 Fact Book). An additional 439 part-time faculty provide up to 70% of all instruction. The roles of both groups are clearly defined in the two State-wide collective bargaining contracts. A review of a variety of materials suggests that MCC hires qualified faculty members. The tenure process for full-time faculty ensures job security and academic freedom. Because a large percentage of full-time faculty are approaching retirement, succession planning could be important for MCC in its future planning.

Faculty workload, salaries, and other working conditions are defined by the state-wide contract, which is generally a five course teaching load combined with student advising and college service. The full-time faculty are actively involved in all aspects of the academic program, including curriculum development and assessment, and student learning outcomes.

Both full- and part-time faculty evaluation and grievance procedures and timelines are outlined in the contracts. The contracts also contain sections outlining the responsible and ethical activities and behavior of faculty. Although voluntary extra duties are compensated with stipends and similar incentives, the many initiatives at the college intensify an already heavy faculty workload. MCC's senior administration questions whether faculty can pursue all of its responsibilities, including a full range of assessment activities with a five course load.

Adjunct faculty workload, as well as full-time faculty teaching overloads, are closely regulated. The statewide contract does not limit the number of credits taught by adjunct faculty, but MCC policy limits adjunct faculty to nine credits per semester.

Because part-time faculty teach such a large proportion of academic courses, it is incumbent upon MCC to devote special efforts in attracting, onboarding, nurturing, and evaluating this critically important resource. The College has developed and implemented an effective orientation program. Part-time faculty also receive stipends for required activities and sometimes for voluntary activities (e.g., serving as an online mentor). Overall, adjunct faculty report a positive experience at MCC, but they have mixed views concerning the extent to which they feel integrated within the institution. Part-time faculty in some departments, such as Nursing and Math, feel more fully integrated than others, but others often feel isolated and sometimes lacking in support and in want of additional communication. In some cases, shared physical space (e.g., math faculty share offices in the "cube farm" in Lowell) may facilitate integration. Special efforts need to continue to ensure that part-time faculty are well-integrated into the college. The new "Part-time Faculty Engagement Liaison" position, when filled, could address many of these concerns.

The diversity of MCC's full- and part-time faculty remains an area of concern. The full- and part-time faculty are predominantly white, so the overall portrait of faculty does not reflect the overall diversity of the student body. In 2009, 14% of full-time faculty (19 individuals) were from underrepresented ethnic and racial groups. By 2013, 20% of faculty (24 individuals) were from those underrepresented groups. During this period, the percentage of minority students grew to 34% of the student body.

The November 17, 2009 CIHE letter noted that the College needed to "demonstrate the college's efforts to increase the diversity of part-time faculty." The College has attempted to address this issue with a purposeful effort. The Office of Equity and Diversity Affairs oversees a program that

trains all search committee members in hiring protocols and in areas such as cognitive errors and bias. Approximately 350 staff and faculty at MCC have participated in this training to date. The InterviewExchange portal invites applicants to self-disclose diversity status, including race, ethnicity, veteran status, and sexual orientation. In addition, the Office works with search committee chairs to ensure that committees are diverse both in terms of employee roles and perspectives.

In addition to reaching out to diverse populations through the vehicles (primarily online) in which it advertises, Human Resources uses inclusive language in describing positions, for example, noting that the college is seeking candidates to work with diverse student populations. Certain criteria that at one time may have excluded a larger talent pool – for example, a requirement for five years teaching experience in a community college setting – have been changed from “required” to “preferred” qualifications.

Diversity and Equity Affairs works closely with search committees in the screening process and it is also connected with the Merrimack Valley Commonwealth Compact, a state initiative aimed at making Massachusetts a welcoming place for a diverse population.

It appears that these efforts are paying off in diversifying the ranks of full-time faculty. The percentage of hires from minority groups increased from 25% in 2008 to 43% in 2013. Ongoing retirements in the faculty ranks will provide additional opportunities to further diversify the full-time faculty ranks.

Increasing the diversity among part-time faculty, which is predominantly white (90%) has been more challenging, and continued efforts are needed in this area. According to the 2013-2014 Fact Book, only 37 of the 439 part-time faculty were from minority groups. While 17% of the student body is Hispanic, only six part-time faculty are of this ethnicity. Aggressive outreach activities may be required to improve this situation. The College is using many of the same recruiting vehicles, including advertising in publications aimed at particular groups of professionals (i.e. Latinos in Higher Education) and InterviewExchange, but these efforts have not been as fruitful, partly because these are national advertising vehicles and primarily used by professionals seeking full-time positions.

Within HR, the Office of Diversity and Equity Affairs has been working with Deans, Assistant Deans and Department Chairs to think “out of the box” and plan more strategically for recruiting more diverse part-time faculty, for example, by staying in touch with promising students who may one day be interested in teaching part-time at the college and by networking. This includes work with the diversity hiring fair that Merrimack Valley Commonwealth Compact is organizing.

Teaching and Advising

Students at MCC encounter faculty with a range of teaching styles and approaches. Technology is infused throughout the curriculum and is found in almost every teaching space. Adequate numbers and variety of instructors help ensure that students are exposed to a variety of approaches and perspectives. Within the framework of rigor and academic integrity, experimentation and innovation are encouraged, often with additional compensation, in the form of stipends, release time, and sabbaticals.

Much of the academic advising is provided by the faculty. Student surveys support the notion that this system works well for MCC. **Scholarship, Research, and Creative Activity**

Many and varied professional development opportunities are available to both full and part-time faculty, including two annual professional days, ongoing workshops, and opportunities to attend conferences and seminars. All faculty can request up to \$750 in funds to attend conferences or workshops. A professional development committee makes decisions on how to allocate these funds on a first-come, first-serve basis; in practice, proposals are routinely approved. Faculty can seek additional funding from their departments, or may be reimbursed for expenses above \$750 from the professional development fund at years end if funds are still available.

Institutional Effectiveness:

MCC effectively evaluates and when appropriate, makes modifications in the number and support of its faculty. It deploys an adequate number of faculty and provides them with many professional development opportunities. Data is regularly collected to evaluate MCC's effectiveness in achieving its mission.

Standard 6: Students

Consistent with its mission, MCC provides quality credit and non-credit programs to the community which it serves. It strives to be sensitive to the academic and non-academic development of its students and has an array of services that are delivered by a devoted and competent faculty and staff. Faculty and student services staff clearly work together in many innovative ways to “educate, engage, and empower a diverse community of learners.” The stated vision of Student Affairs at MCC is to work with students, faculty, and staff to provide a learning environment that encourages students' personal and intellectual growth, fosters their involvement in the college community, assists them in overcoming specific personal, physical or intellectual barriers, enhances their capacity to appreciate individual and cultural differences, and challenges them to increase their understanding of themselves and others as responsible members of society. Student Affairs provides opportunities for all students to become active and engaged leaders in society. It ensures that ethical standards are upheld and that students' right and responsibilities are well-publicized as required by the U. S. Department of Education and the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education. Further, the policies and procedures relating to education records, transcripts, and disclosure of information are well publicized on the college's website and in printed documents.

The professional staff that deliver comprehensive services to students at MCC are well trained and appropriately credentialed. While the bulk of student services are provided by the Division of Academic Affairs/Student Affairs, direct services are also provided by the Division of Enrollment Management, Research and Planning (admissions and enrollment management) and Division of Administration and Finance (financial aid) which leads to the need for a coordinated comprehensive approach to ensure continued effectiveness. Staff training is ongoing and personnel consistently review “Best Practices” to ensure development of their respective programs. Services to students are guided by standards of ethical practice and maintenance of professional codes of conduct.

Admissions

The college's Mission guides student recruitment and enrollment efforts. Documents are clearly written and available in a variety of forms. A high school diploma or GED or High School Equivalency (HSE) is required for admission. Programs requiring selective admissions criteria are clearly identified in the college catalog and website. MCC operates as a dual-campus institution in Bedford and Lowell Massachusetts with an enrollment of 9702 students for the fall semester, 2013. Enrollment for fall 2014 showed continued decline to 9210 (-5.4%).

The diverse student body is comprised of enrollees from the many regional high schools and 33 different countries. The demographic profile of students attending in the fall 2013 reveals that 57% of the student population is female and 43% are male. Of that group, 63% are enrolled as part-time students and 37% are enrolled full-time. The representation of full-time students has steadily declined since 2009 (-44%). More than a third (approximately 37%) of the student population represents the growing minority population in the region; the Hispanic population is the largest minority group (17%). All incoming students are required to take ACCUPLACER placement exams in the areas of math, reading and writing. ACCUPLACER scores assist advisors in placing first semester students into appropriate courses. Seventy one percent of the fall 2013 new students required at least one developmental course while 54% of those required at least two developmental courses. Students can receive assistance in preparing for the ACCUPLACER through the Academic Center for Enrichment which also offers short term refresher courses for math, reading and writing..

Retention and Graduation

Support for retention and student success is evidenced by the efforts of the entire MCC community. The self-study indicates that more than 82% of the first-time, full-time degree seeking students who enroll in the fall term return the following spring semester, and 63% of its first-time, full-time degree-seeking students who entered the previous fall enroll for the following fall semester. Research indicates retention for part-time students has also increased (fall to spring: 67.7%; fall to fall: 47.6%). The College disaggregates this data for a more granular analysis by student type.

MCC is to be commended for its efforts to raise its six-year success rate (graduation or transfer) to 81% which is third highest of all the community colleges in Massachusetts. The College has benefitted from a Title III grant, "Strategies for Student Success," to improve student success. A variety of activities fell under this grant. The three-year (150%) graduation rate for the 2010 cohort was reported as 12.7% -- somewhat lower than the median graduation rate of other state community colleges (15%). The 2011 cohort increased to 14.25% because of initiatives implemented using the grant. The College, however, still has a ways to reach its goal of a 25% graduation rate which may need to be reduced to be more realistic..

Financial aid is awarded in the form of federal grants, federal loans, federal work study, institutional student aid, institutional grants, private grants and private loans. The availability of financial aid and the appeal processes are effectively communicated in the college catalog, student handbook, college web site, and informational sessions. The web site has a convenient link to the FAFSA, permitting students to apply online. The availability of financial aid was recognized in the self study as an important variable that clearly supports student retention. Federal, State, institutional and private sources accounted for almost \$21.4 million in financial aid available to the 42% of students receiving aid in FY 2014. Applications for financial aid have increased approximately 46% since 2009 as tuition has increased a 20%. During that same time MCC increased its institutional financial aid 27% (\$900,000) with the goal of reducing students' financial burdens, especially for those who might otherwise seek loans. MCC's default rate on loans is determined to be 16.9% and this is one reason why staff continually offer financial counseling and advice to students receiving those loans.

Policies relating to Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) are clearly stated and available to students. Staff report that more than 400 students receive notice that they have not met the standard of satisfactory progress each semester. Staff work with these students to offer strategies to return them to good academic standing.

Student Services

MCC offers a full range of comprehensive student services that are available in person and online. The College periodically reviews and assesses the effectiveness of these programs to ensure they are meeting students' academic and personal needs and serve to enhance the probability of their success. To enhance persistence and retention, students are invited to new student orientation and opening day activities. Orientation is designed around the philosophy of the First Year Experience which provides incoming students with information on available services through seminars, workshops and other activities that focus on creating relationships that enhance success.

The Academic Center for Enrichment offers tutoring, mentoring and access to supplemental instruction for STEM and Health courses. A recent grant permitted a redesign of services,

particularly in the area of supplemental instruction. Data indicate a substantial increase of 19% in the number of tutoring sessions available to students. Increases in grade point averages and completion rates were positive indicators for those who participated in these programs.

MCC offers a comprehensive support program to students with disabilities. The self-study indicates a 40% increase in students requesting services over the past 10 years, and now over 1,000 students are served annually. The most recent surveys report that 70% of the respondents were satisfied with services offered by Disability Services. The Team is impressed by the College's report that the persistence rate for students with disabilities who entered MCC in 2012 is 68%, compared with 55% for the non-disabled population.

Short-term personal counseling is provided to students by licensed mental health professionals. Personal counseling is confidential, short-term, goal-oriented, and free of charge. Personal counselors can assist students with referrals to outside services in cases where extended therapy or specialized assistance is required. Administrators and staff agree that additional counseling staff could increase effectiveness of these services. More than 700 students at MCC receive veteran benefits. The increase in the veteran population has been a challenge, particularly with regard to the need for timely certification by the Federal Government. The Team is concerned that the process for certifying veteran status and eligibility is decentralized, as this heightens the risk of inconsistent application of criteria and jeopardizes the college's compliance with Federal requirements.

Student Life at MCC is robust. Students can participate in at least 30 different clubs and organizations on both campuses. Because of a partnership with UMass-Lowell, MCC is able to provide students with access to a robust intramural and club sports program for men and women that strongly adheres to the concept of providing learning experiences outside the classroom. Most of these club sports occur on the UMass Lowell campus.

Health and safety is taken seriously at MCC. The Student Assessment and Intervention Team (SAIT) is composed of professional staff from a variety of areas. This team meets on a regular basis to discuss behavior that may be disruptive, threatening or potentially harmful to the members of the college community. The approach has been proactive, and the development of the Care and Concern Outreach Team serves as a significant vehicle to create awareness and reaction to health and safety concerns on campus. Beyond the goal of creating awareness, the team meets to assess behaviors that may present threats to the college environment. Intervention and support is recognized as the ultimate goal in serving students and members of the college community.

The college follows the guidelines of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as it relates to student records. The college complies with essential guidelines to protect privacy and confidentiality of student records.

The November 17, 2009 CIHE letter noted that "since the Title III grant contributed to increased student support, explain how the college will continue to sustain this commitment when the grant is completed." The College has clearly shown that many of the services begun with Title III funding have been institutionalized.

Institutional Effectiveness:

Student and Enrollment services at MCC are guided by a well-recognized and accepted institutional mission and very strong commitment to providing a student-centered delivery of services. Strong leadership and excellent and committed staff provide innovative programs and services to promote academic success, personal and social development and a high level of student engagement opportunities.

Considerable evidence exists to show that decisions are made through data-driven efforts. As staff identify areas in need of improvement, they willingly assess and seek best practices to redefine their approaches. These efforts foster a climate of embracing change and support for more efficiency in delivery excellent services to students.

Standard Seven: Library and Other Information Resources

The MCC Library serves as an integral aspect of student life, as well as a critical component of the College's "everyone teaches, everyone learns" mission. Comprised of two separate libraries, located on the Bedford and Lowell campuses, the libraries operate independently, but provide parity in their services, hours, staffing, and collections for the two campus communities. Over 270,000 users visited the libraries in 2013/14, with an almost equal distribution of visitors among the two campuses.

Each library has been renovated to make it attractive and comfortable for students. Both libraries house a collection of print and audiovisual materials, and provide comfortable seating and study carrels that are replete with computers, as well as wireless access to the Internet. Each also houses a library instruction classroom that has 13 - 16 computers and a projection system. In FY 2014, the librarians taught over 300 library instruction classes, serving over 4000 students.

Additionally, each library contains a Teaching, Learning and Reflection Center (TLRC) that draws full and part-time faculty for gatherings, office space, and as a location for instructional workshops. The Bedford library also houses a writing lab. Currently, there is a need for additional quiet space within library walls. For example, there is no area for quiet study in the Bedford library, but the College plans to utilize a small space outside the Assistant Dean's office for this purpose.

The libraries also serve as the only open computer centers on each campus. Computers have been placed throughout the libraries in study carrels and on tables. This dual purpose of library and computer lab creates a vibrant and well utilized center on each campus for students who require computers for writing papers, for research, and for printing, but often hinders the service level of the library staff who are often called upon to assist with technical issues, such as printer problems, login questions, and help with specific software applications. This technical assistance can impact the time professional librarians need to guide students to relevant information sources, collaborate with faculty for information literacy, teach library instruction classes, conduct and assess library projects, and curate the collection. The College may wish to consider separate IT staffing to assist with users' needs.

A full-time Assistant Dean of Libraries oversees library operations and leads a team of professional librarians and paraprofessional staff. The almost equal number of staff, services, and collections on each campus shows the library's dedication to the "one college" concept of MCC. Staffing also includes at least 15 part-time staff positions that help to cover the public service areas. As there is frequent turnover in these positions causing inconsistency in service and the constant need to train replacement staff, it may be beneficial to library services to reconsider its extensive use of part-time staff rather than adding full-time positions.

Resources and Access

The library is open 68 hours per week, including early morning and evening hours, and one weekend day. The hours coincide with the academic schedule and support the needs of the students and faculty.

As of FY 2014, library holdings included: 45,089 print volumes, almost 300,000 ebooks, 285 print subscriptions, 22,660 full-text e-journals, and 19,447 audiovisual items and streaming media subscriptions. The library conducts an annual inventory, evaluation, and weeding of its collections and will continue to increase the number of digital resources in response to the needs of students and faculty. The library is a

member of the regional consortium, North of Boston Library Exchange (NOBLE), which allows access to over 3 million *more* circulating items through an electronic request process.

The Library collects annual statistics on usage of the collection, gate counts, in-person and online reference interactions (7500), library instruction classes, and online analytics of database use (170,000 sessions with EBSCO databases alone) and library website views (141,370 views) [FY 2014]. Following are additional assessments used to gauge and report library effectiveness: (1) an annual report, (2) LibQual, a library-satisfaction survey used in academic libraries, (3) benchmarking comparisons with other community college libraries in the State, (4) a co-curricular program review that includes a comprehensive assessment by an outside consultant credentialed in academic libraries, and (5) a resulting five-year Strategic Plan (2013-18) that outlines eight goals and the action steps required to achieve these goals.

The vast majority of MCC's classrooms (91%) contain multimedia capabilities. The College also provides 200 public wireless ports that support wireless access throughout both campuses. The Blackboard Learning Management System supports online and hybrid instruction and allows faculty and students online access to course syllabi, educational materials, expectations, grading, online discussion, email, and group work.

Information and Technological Literacy:

The library focuses much of its staff time and energy on instruction and assessment relating to the promoting the students' acquisition of information literacy, which they have consistently demonstrated as an integral aspect of student success. The library not only provides library instruction classes by request, but also offers workshops for "new faculty" and partners with faculty to design information literacy assignments, projects, and instruction. In a 2012 post-instruction assessment, 96% of faculty respondents reported satisfaction with the quality and content of the instruction. The library has received several grants to enhance its information literacy services.

Although students' competence in information literacy is required in the NEASC standards (4.7, 7.9, 7.10), it is not included as one of the College's Institutional Student Learning Outcomes but is instead subsumed under the Critical Thinking outcome. As a result, the Library's ability to embed information literacy into the curriculum and to collaborate effectively with a large number of faculty members who could partner with the Library to raise students' awareness of how to identify, assess, and cite appropriate information and library resources is limited. Including Information Literacy as a learning outcome could benefit students and better utilize the work of the Library.

Institutional Effectiveness:

The Library enhances academic excellence, student success, faculty instructional goals, and service to the community. Its mission statement describes its provision of onsite and remote access to resources, as well as the technology, expertise, and space the MCC community needs to be successful. Assessment mechanisms are used to demonstrate evidence of achievement and to use findings to improve and increase the effectiveness of services. The College's annual *Academic and Student Affairs Strategic Directions Plan* includes the supporting initiatives undertaken by the Library each year.

Standard 8: Physical and Technological Resources

The physical facilities of the college are designed to serve students, staff and faculty and actively support the mission and vision of the College. With a team of skilled and enthusiastic service employees, the buildings are obviously well-tended and cared for. MCC's two campuses total ~ 530,000 square feet, and include one suburban campus in Bedford and one urban campus located in Lowell, approximately 20 minutes apart from each other. Where feasible, both campuses feature the same type of facilities in order to effectively meet the needs of students and support a quality teaching and learning environment. Through prudent financial planning, the College has completed several major facilities upgrades on both campuses to improve the teaching and learning environment and to support energy efficiency. The college's master plan has identified the need for more academic space on both campuses and the college is addressing this in a variety of ways.

Buildings are designed to support student, instructional and administrative services and both campuses have full libraries. The college has a total of 147 educational spaces, including computer labs with specially equipped space for CAD, Engineering Information Technology and Graphic Design. Health program labs are located on both campuses, with Bedford hosting Radiological Technology and sonography and Lowell supporting such programs as Dental Hygiene, Medical Assisting, Academy of Health Professions, and Nursing programs. Plans for additional buildings are in a variety of stages of development for both campuses.

The college's physical space facilities are well maintained as evidenced by its rankings in the annual Sightlines report, prepared by the Massachusetts Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM) to allow a college to benchmark its efforts with the other 15 Massachusetts community colleges. The FY 2012 report indicates that the College has consistently improved its campus over the past three years by investing in projects to repair and maintain facilities and in FY 2013, MCC is ranked as the second most technologically complex college in the peer group.

The college optimizes its physical and technological resources through planning and prioritization to support strategic priorities, enrollment growth, academic programs and student success. Physical resource planning is an ongoing process based on directions identified in the Massachusetts State and Community College System Strategic Capital Program, Massachusetts DCAMM, Deferred Maintenance Plan and the college's own master plan that was developed in 2007. The plan has been the framework for campus planning and renovation and includes short-, mid- and long-term facilities requirements linked to academic and student services, support functions and financial planning. The FY 2014 audit reveals that physical plant renovations, including improvements and adaptation and renewal projects, totaled \$2.3 million. Regular inter-divisional planning meetings are held and result in a strategic approach to preventative maintenance, space planning/utilization and future expansion. A campus Space Committee, consisting of faculty and staff members, meets with the Executive Vice President each semester to provide input on current and emerging needs. The State Department of Higher Education requires that each college allocates 5% of available resources for deferred maintenance. Middlesex uses its own funds to meet or exceed this limit. While not a major issue now, deferred maintenance of MCC's aging facilities will require more major capital investments in the future.

Several major facilities upgrades on both the Bedford and Lowell campuses have improved the teaching and learning environment and supported energy efficiency. These include a library renovation to provide a more welcoming environment, increased student access to computers, and

increased seating capacity for study. Other campus improvements include renovating the Academic Career and Transfer Center to include the accelerated developmental math program, new equipment in the fitness center and converting the Trustee's House to use geothermal energy. Acquiring leased space has also enabled the College to accommodate increased program and service requirements. Additional instructional space needs are being addressed by renovating a donated building to accommodate the needs of academic programs and performing arts space. In addition, the college has received state approval and funding for two additional academic buildings, one on each campus.

MCC is a signatory of the American College and University President's Climate Commitment. The Sightlines report shows that the College dedicates a larger amount of resources to maintenance performance and although it is in the highest 25% for electrical consumption, it shows the lowest energy consumption among its peer group.

Faculty, students and staff report feeling safe on both campuses. Security is provided 24/7 on both campuses, and all personnel have CPR/First Aid certifications. MCC has an Emergency Management Plan that is updated every two years with the collaboration of local police and fire departments, though more frequent emergency drills to test the plan could be beneficial. The College deploys a trained, three-tiered Emergency Management Team consisting of 100 faculty and staff that are prepared to assist in emergency responses until professional help arrives. The College is replacing its current emergency management system with a new version that allows better and more targeted communication.

The College contracts with Campus Works to provide executive leadership for information technology services. The Chief Technology Officer is assigned to the College by Campus Works and serves as a part of the College's senior management team. The contract also provides project consulting services. Faculty and students have access to a range of technology support including classroom and administrative hardware and software services. Meetings with students and faculty revealed that both would appreciate more support for Blackboard services. All educational spaces are smart room equipped with instructor computer station, internet access and projection capability. Six conference/presentation rooms are equipped with TV and VCR/DVR capability.

The college has both a technology strategic and tactical plan and upgrades its technology and infrastructure on an ongoing basis accordingly. The FY 2014 audit shows a \$1.0 million investment in IT projects. Still, the College acknowledges the need to continue its investments to keep pace with academic and administrative computing needs. The Technology Service Desk is available 24/7 for faculty, staff and students by phone and email. Network improvements have increased volume and speed capabilities to ensure efficiency and access. Bandwidth is currently at 100 megabytes per second, and connectivity between the two campuses has increased ten-fold in recent years, although the administration acknowledges that the need for bandwidth continues to increase. Wireless access points have increased from 46 in 2012 to 170 in 2014 providing 100% access for both campuses. In summer 2014, the college began implementing Virtual Desktop Infrastructure replacing desktops with thin client workstations. The goal is to convert a majority of 1,650 workstations to VDI. Savings will be seen in support requirements, energy efficiency and security and hardware lifecycle.

Security initiatives include the implementation of Network Access Control, establishing authentication, identifying users, tracking usage and dealing with emerging issues. Policies are in place to safely store and use identifiable data. Administrative functions are PCI compliant.

The website is newly redesigned, to be more interactive, engaging and user friendly. Use by the visiting team found it to be easy to use. There is a MCC mobile app, providing easy access to college information and services. Students have access to Microsoft Office 365.

All full-time faculty and full-time and part-time staff are provided a laptop or desktop computer. Part-time faculty have access to fully networked computers in the part-time faculty offices.

Institutional Effectiveness:

The College effectively collects and utilizes data to plan for and prioritize physical and technology resource allocation.

Standard 9: Financial Resources

Middlesex Community College is a financially stable institution with diverse sources of revenue that supports high-quality academic programs. Despite an economic downturn that resulted in declining state allocations between 2010 and 2013, the College was able to stabilize its budget through operating efficiencies, effective enrollment planning, grants and Federal ARRA funding. The State increased its financial support for public higher education in FY 2014, resulting in a 16% increase in the College's state funding allocation over FY 2013. The College has healthy fiscal assets, despite state funding declining in the past ten years from 60% of the total budget to 30%. Net assets increased \$4.3 or 13% from 2010 to 2013 and another 4.3% in 2014. Long-term investments have grown from \$2.3 million in FY 2010 to \$11.3 million in 2013. Due to multi-year planning processes and vigorous pursuit of grants and fundraising, MCC has effectively responded to enrollment declines and has reserves that could address financial emergencies and unforeseen circumstances.

The College's senior financial leadership is known, respected and highly regarded within the State's community college system as well as within several key departments in state government. MCC has been a leader in advocating for the new Massachusetts Community College funding formula, moving community college funding to a performance based funding system. Middlesex students directly benefited from the implementation of the new funding formula, which allowed the college to freeze student fees for the first time in ten years. The administration has, however, expressed concerns that the formula will be fairly and consistently implemented in the future.

MCC's Board of Trustees Finance, Investment and Audit subcommittees work with the Executive Vice President and the Assistant Vice President of Administration and Finance to ensure financial stability and the alignment between resource allocation and the fulfillment of strategic mission priorities. The Board reviews and approves college budgets, investments, major purchases and revenue generation initiatives. The Administration and Finance Division of the College conducts a three-year budget forecasting process that considers important environmental factors and allows for effective long-range planning tied to strategic planning priorities. The annual budget process is organized, systematized and participatory. Efforts to communicate complex principles and complicated systems are appreciated by faculty and staff and continued communication is essential.

Comprehensive planning, sound fiscal management and efficient use of resources have allowed the college to continue to ensure academic quality, maintain essential operations, and invest in the fulfillment of strategic priorities. MCC's resources are allocated to support the achievement of its educational purposes and mission. As reported by the FY 2012 IPEDs report, 69% of the resources allocated directly supported instruction, academic and student support services and scholarships with 22% allocated for plant and institutional support.

Clearly documented and consistently implemented fiscal policies are in place to ensure compliance with ethical standards and sound financial practices. The college is audited by several organizations including an annual external financial audit. The past 18 annual external audits have disclosed no instances of noncompliance or material weaknesses. In the past year, the college became responsible for its own A-133 audit, which had been managed previously by the State of Massachusetts. This audit revealed no instances of noncompliance and no issues involving internal control. External and internal audits indicate that policies and procedures are being followed and that financial resources are being safeguarded with integrity. The newly published FY 2014 external audit reveals that the college's financial position remains strong.

The College uses the Banner Financial software system to support its administrative functions. This system allows for the effective management of fiscal resources at the cost-center level while maintaining centralized accounting of all funds. Policies and procedures are in place to ensure that both unrestricted and grant resources are directed appropriately. Staff surveys reflect that cost-center managers agree that this system helps them to manage their department budgets.

While tuition rates have been steady for the past five years, fees have increased 13% during this period, reflecting the decline in State support. Believing that persistence and retention rates of students awarded Safety Net Scholarships are significantly higher than the general student population, the College has worked to increase this form of financial support to \$900,000 in FY 2014, a 12% increase above FY 2013.

The November 17, 2009 CIHE letter noted that since “the budget allocation from the State has decreased, the college should expand its success with the continued development of the annual fund, and with grants from private foundations, businesses, corporations, and state and federal agencies.” The college has successfully addressed this concern. The Annual Campaign is robust, allowing \$50,000 to be distributed annually for mini-grants. Similarly, the acquisition of grants continues with great success. The end of the Fact Book contains four full pages of grants that were funded in 2014.

The Middlesex Community College Foundation (MCCF), a 501 c (3), exists to enlist private sector support "in furtherance of the educational and charitable purposes of Middlesex Community College." It is the vehicle for fundraising from individuals, corporations, small businesses and private foundations and is a legally separate tax-exempt component unit of the College. The MCC Foundation generates income through revenue from investments managed by the MCC Foundation Board of Directors, the proceeds of the college's annual Celebrity Forum, Annual Fund, and other programs and campaigns for direct benefit of the college, and a Major Gifts Campaign could be a next step.

The grant procurement effort is managed through the centralization of grant writing in the Office of Resource Development. Although vigorous in its pursuit of grants, the College is strategic about grant funding and is not “chasing every dollar.” Despite the associated fiscal challenges, MCC is committed to the institutionalization of successful initiatives piloted through grant funding. The college averages approximately \$10 million in grant funding each year. Strategic partnerships with community organizations result in enhanced opportunities for external funding and enrollment. Both funding and enrollment are metrics that the College needs to pay close attention to. Robust plans for the future will prudently draw from reserves.

Institutional Effectiveness:

The College has in place appropriate internal and external mechanisms to evaluate its fiscal condition and financial management and to maintain its integrity. It uses these results for improvement

Standard 10: Public Disclosure

The College uses a broad range of print and digital formats to disseminate information about itself. The host of comprehensive print and online publications available provides an inviting and informative view of the College. MCC's *Academic Catalog* is a primary source of information about the College. Sufficiently detailed and well-indexed, it is published regularly and supplemented or updated by appropriate academic and administrative offices. Additionally, identifiable icons are depicted throughout to promote student awareness of the Institution's student learning outcomes (ISLOs). The College also publishes a comprehensive print *Fact Book & Outcomes Report*. The most recent edition (2013/14) includes a wealth of data on student demographics, student success measures, learning outcomes, assessments, benchmarks, and other appropriate material.

The College began redesigning the college website in 2012 to replicate the content of the print academic catalog, including links to relevant visual and print information for ease of use. The College used Acalog, a "sophisticated academic catalog management system," to convert print information to an online, responsive format. The website also provides links to departmental information and to independent websites for departments and programs. Information from the *Student Handbook* and the *Fact Book & Outcomes Report* is also found on the website. The site also includes current news, promotions, events, and important dates, replete with radio buttons, hyperlinks, and graphics. Additionally, the College has created a highly functional mobile application from the website. It also presents a daily update on the College's events and activities. Searches for information in both print and online publications resulted in the successful retrieval of a wealth of verifiable data about the students, as well as the overall health and strength of the institution.

The College utilizes a variety of social media to engage prospective, current, and former students, as well as the community at large. Individuals may follow the College in popular social websites, such as *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Pinterest*, and *Instagram*, to stay current with College information, campus events, and student activities. Staff members from the College's Office of Marketing Communications are responsive to users' information requests via these social websites, and will either reply directly to the inquirer or will forward the inquiry to the proper individual or department on campus who can provide the information. The Office of Marketing Communication publishes a *Social Media Code of Conduct* as part of these applications. This Office also maintains a blog about the College and these blog posts may be viewed and published by area news venues.

The College also utilizes a text messaging system to send messages to the campus community and any other subscribers and can quickly report potential campus crises, college closings, weather issues, or any other difficulties that could impact students or classes. Texts can be sent from any location and there are several College representatives who have access to this system.

Institutional Effectiveness:

Through its use of a wide assortment of online and print publications available, which also includes admissions view books, advising schedules, transfer information, materials on specific programs, student e-portfolios, MCC effectively discloses a wealth of information to the internal and external constituencies. Branding is consistent and each informational source contributes to a comprehensive and effective marketing plan for the College. Information sources describe all facets of the Institution's offerings, assessment, and effectiveness. The Office of Marketing Communication is aware of the need for ongoing systematic communication with departments and individuals to ensure accuracy and currency of information in all venues and is working toward this goal.

Standard 11: Integrity

A member of the Massachusetts Community College System, MCC operates as a public, two-year institution of higher education, governed by a single board of trustees. The college appears to be in compliance with policies and procedures set forth and approved by its Board of Trustees, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the Federal Government.

PACE survey results strongly indicate that faculty and staff believe that they are governed by effective leadership. The College has established an environment of inclusiveness, openness, high standards, honesty and transparency in how it operates. These standards are shared by MCC's Board, administration, faculty, staff and students.

MCC periodically reviews its mission, formulates strategic plans and develops and implements policies and procedures that govern the college and ensure an effective delivery of education and services to students. The College administration consistently provides an open and transparent environment and the college invites participation from faculty and staff. MCC is sensitive to the voices heard through the FSA and the student government association. The college continues to ensure that it observes all legal and compliance issues through promulgation of new policies and procedures and through ongoing professional development for faculty and staff.

Members of the college community are committed to promoting fairness and ethical treatment by regularly reviewing current policies and procedures that guide the college in the mission of providing quality education. Information for prospective students is clear and the college offers equal access to post secondary education for students attending the MCC campuses. Statements regarding non-discriminatory policies and practices are found in a variety of places, including the catalog, student materials, and the website.

MCC complies with State and Federal statutes relative to hiring practices and these procedures are continuously reviewed to ensure that capable, qualified, and diverse individuals are being employed. In line with its goals for diversity, the College is aware that additional progress needs to be made in diversifying the faculty and staff to better reflect the composition of the student body.

The collective bargaining agreement assures a clear understanding of practices relating to fair treatment and creates a mechanism for handling disputes and providing due process. Issues relating to promotion, faculty evaluation and academic freedom are evident and support fairness and equity in the treatment of grievances and disputes.

Policies, procedures and information regarding programs are widely documented and disseminated to current and prospective students. The website is student-friendly and easy to navigate, and with the *College Catalog* contains pertinent information relating to academic programs, student procedures, admission processes, and student services. Students consistently emphasized how well the college has provided the information needed for their success. Policies regarding Student Rights and responsibilities are clearly stated and accessible to students in publications and on the web site. The *Student Handbook* is current and well-organized. It fully informs students about policies and procedures of the college. Refund policies are clearly stated, as are Rights and Responsibilities relating to the student code of conduct (judicial process), and the student grievance procedures. The document also clearly describes how students can address their concerns about their course grades. Students also are clearly informed through the *Student Handbook* and on the college web site of

expected and appropriate behavior while on campus. The code of conduct and student grievance procedure allow for opportunities of investigation, inquiry, adjudication and appeal.

Institutional Effectiveness:

MCC effectively promotes integrity in a variety of ways. These mechanisms are periodically reviewed and modified, and shared with the college community. MCC operates in a transparent manner, widely disseminates information, and regularly seeks input from a variety of audiences.

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS SUMMARY

The College is well on its way in developing a culture of assessment, as it undertakes regular assessment activities to assure its effectiveness. It regularly collects a wealth of data and uses the findings to modify existing programs/services and to launch new ones. MCC effectively uses nationally normed instruments, such as Community College Study of Student Engagement (CSSE) to gauge student engagement, and Personal Assessment of the College Environment study (PACE) to ascertain its working environment, which could be supplemented by more regular internal surveys to gauge a variety of topics. Instrument templates, such as Survey Monkey, can yield a vast array of useful information about students, employees, and the general community.

The College has made progress in assessing student learning, through its program review and general education assessments, which is yet to be expanded to provide both formal and informal assessment activities throughout the College.

Affirmation of Compliance Summary:

- **Credit Hour:** MCC follows the Carnegie Unit in its expectations for student learning and its subsequent granting of course credits. As confirmed by the team, assurance of the consistent application of this standard is supervised through oversight by department chairs and academic deans, who review all faculty syllabi for completeness and adequacy of expectations for student work. Standards are applied according to the number of credits granted, as well as with consistency across modes of delivery-- including online, in hybrid courses, on-ground, through self-paced flexible studies, in high school partnership classes, or through assessment for prior learning.
- **Credit Transfer Policies:** Available on its website, MCC has developed and implemented a comprehensive credit transfer policy that delineated how transfer credits are accepted. It also maintains a list of articulation agreements with other colleges that is readily available to students.
- **Student Complaints:** MCC maintains a student complaint policy and accompanying procedures that are disseminated to the students in a variety of formats.
- **Verification of Student Identity:** Student identity is verified through unique logins into the Blackboard system and library databases.
- **Public Notification of an Evaluation Visit and Opportunity for Public Comment:** Appropriate notification of the evaluation visit was made in a variety of ways to the internal community. Notice of the visit was also published in the September 7, 2014 edition of the *Lowell Sun*, the region's local newspaper.

Summative List of Institutional Strengths and Concerns

Major Strengths:

Collaborative and inclusive environment- The college's constituents are regularly invited to be involved in decision-making functions, including the revision of the Mission, formulation of the strategic plan, and proposed reorganization of the academic affairs area.

Concentration on student success- The College has made a commitment to increasing student persistence, transfer, and graduation through the deployment of resources and acquisition of outside funds. Its new and innovative approaches in addressing the developmental needs of students are especially commendable.

Leadership- Strong, proactive group of professionals who are effectively guiding MCC through potentially troubled waters (e.g., reduced State funding, increased emphasis on accountability).

Student Learning Outcomes Assessment- The college's long range and multi-faceted approach to learning assessment integrates State expectations for learning assessment, with faculty-driven definition of institutional learning outcomes, and professional development to help guide faculty in this implementation. In the process, this commitment reflects as well a growing understanding of how to produce valid and meaningful data for the improvement of teaching and learning.

Personnel- Cooperative, collaborative, well-educated, and student-centered.

Finances- Despite the challenges posed by reduced State contributions, the College has found alternative ways of funding new initiatives. The College's success in acquiring grants is commendable.

Two campus structure- The two campuses are treated equally with regard to services and resources. The senior leadership even have offices on each campus.

Facilities- While aging, MCC boasts a unique blend of buildings that serve its mission well. While this is a strength, there are also indications that additional space will be required for the College to effectively achieve its mission.

Services to students- Wide range of activities and services that effectively address student needs.

Areas of Concern:

Board of Trustees- While it appears that the current Board is doing a better job in fulfilling its responsibilities as articulated in Section 22 of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts General Laws, the Board needs to create a by-laws that articulates the authority, responsibilities, and relationships among the governing board, administration, faculty and staff.

Part-time faculty- With part-time faculty teaching almost 70% of the instructional sections, a high level of oversight of this critically important resource is needed to ensure these faculty receive the support needed to be effective so that students are assured a consistent level of quality education. Delegating the oversight and evaluation of part-time faculty to the academic divisions can result in inconsistency throughout the college.

Diversification of the faculty- In line with its goals for diversity, additional progress needs to be made in diversifying the faculty and staff to better reflect the composition of the student body.

Assessment- Given the importance of the college's non-academic departments and functions, systematically assessing the effectiveness of these services provided to enhance the student experience outside the classroom will be critical to the college's efforts to increase student persistence, attainment, and personal and civic development. While MCC has taken steps to assess student learning outcomes, continued progress also needs to be made in this area.

Consistency of the Academic Program- To facilitate the assessment of course-level learning outcomes and to ensure students have an equivalent learning experience particularly when multiple sections of the same course are offered, consistent learning expectations need to be developed and communicated to students. Course objectives are not always embedded in relevant course syllabi and most multi-section courses lack common course outcomes which hamper the college in its efforts to fully implement its new general education outcomes, to communicate student learning expectations, and to assess course-level outcomes.