Executive Summary

The Foundations of Excellence (FoE) operation this academic year at Queens College involved a broad-based and large group of faculty, administrators, staff, and students. Following the Gardner Institute program, much of the work was done in the nine Dimension Committees and is represented in the data gathered and placed in the evidence library on the FoEtec website along with the survey results. This report cannot possibly capture all of that information, but it is preserved for the most important recommendation of the FoE Task Force, and that is to establish an Implementation Committee to begin examining the recommendations at the end of the report.

Rather than simply implement all or many of the recommendations as listed, the Task Force encourages this Implementation Committee to conduct more research and discussions as the implementation begins so as to keep up with changes in the campus community that the implementation will bring. For example, the College launched a One-Stop Service Center to assist students with questions regarding registration, financial aid, and bursar during the time of this report’s writing. This unit not only changes the campus landscape but also provides a new data source on how our processes may be better tuned to meet the demands of our uniquely diverse, urban, largely commuter, public-school student population. We need this flexibility, as well as the plan, to succeed in improving the excellence of the student’s first year experience as well as their ultimate retention to graduation.

In addition to removing or mitigating the obstacles students face, we must also inspire students with our academic programs as this is why they came to college in the first place. This process has been referred to as “rowing with both oars” and the combination is powerful. That means we must deepen the engagement of the faculty in the classroom to even better engage the students. Then the infrastructure must support that engagement by not only having a clear process but by also engaging the students as people directly.

Another point is clear. That is that in the process of improving retention, with all its complexity and need for choices among projects demanding resources, we have a chance to help generate new resources for the College. Here we may have a happy co-occurrence of what is the “right thing to do” and what is “expedient.” Student success can be the institution’s own success.

The Steering Committee wishes to thank all who participated. This process has launched to a great start and we look forward to the implementation process of this multi-year operation.
Introduction

Based on the recommendation of President Muyskens, the Foundations of Excellence project was spearheaded by Provost James Stellar and Vice President of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management Joseph Bertolino. The project was officially launched across the campus on October 20th, 2011.

The Foundations of Excellence project was carried out in partnership with the John N. Gardner Institute which provides the tools and structural outline for carrying out the process. Queens College participated in both Foundations of Excellence in the First-Year and Foundations of Excellence Transfer Focus. Queens College carried out the process not only to strengthen the vision of the first academic year for first-year and transfer students but also to improve yearly retention and increase the graduation rate.

The task force was composed of a core steering team of nine, a set of nine dimension committees that were each led by two co-chairs from different areas of the campus, and seven to eight members per committee. The final task force was roughly ninety strong.

This final report of the Foundations of Excellence project serves the purpose of compiling the work of the nine dimensions committees while also capturing some critical findings and areas of concern. These past months have provided eye-opening insight not only in regards to the transitional experiences of first-year and transfer students but student experiences as a whole. The dimensions committees have been able to look at areas that perform well and can continue to improve, while also finding areas that need considerable attention and resources.

In comparing the first-year experiences of both populations, it was rather clear that first-year students received the majority of support through programs, services, and academic opportunities. The Freshman Year Initiative program, English 110, and the College’s liberal arts General Education system of Perspectives have helped produce well-rounded students who have a solid academic foundation. First-year students were generally recognized to be better able to handle the rigors of a Queens College baccalaureate degree than students who had come in from junior colleges. Historical retention data of the College has shown that most first-year students continue on into their second year; it is after the start of the second year that some begin to transfer out or leave. It is at this point where areas of study begin to develop and, in their view, Queens College does not offer their interests or is not as recognized for their programs of interest. A push towards having more full-time faculty members teach introductory and first-year courses may reverse this as students would then have a greater chance to make long-lasting connections with faculty members. Multiple recommendations were also made to enlarge FYI to accommodate all incoming freshmen (currently it supports up to ¾) and extend it to a full-year program or to at least add additional components, such as a freshman seminar.

Reviewing the experiences of transfers generally proved more difficult. Unlike first-year students, they are a more amorphous group to identify and categorize and there are generally few programs in place that allow faculty and/or staff to continuously engage with new transfers. Transfers generally enter the College as upperclassmen with very little “welcome” from the campus community and proceed to transition into the classroom and the College with assistance only from a select few offices/services. Academic policies regarding transfer credit and placement are also complex and difficult to negotiate. Many of our transfers are ready to pursue a major upon entry yet the lack of academic guidance, faculty
availability during these entry periods, course availability (given inventory and scheduling complications) as well as program application deadline dates that do not align with a rolling admissions system, entry into the major and first-semester course scheduling is a difficult feat.

As students, transfers have tended to dissolve into the greater population and as such there is little data on services used as they progress from their first-year forward. Tracking the types of services they use and the issues they face has been difficult; certainly more work must be done on the College’s part to find out where and how transfer students fit in. Any initiatives must be mindful of the variety of backgrounds that transfer students come from, and that multiple initiatives are necessary to address different groups within the transfer population. Initiatives must also be mindful that Queens College belongs to a university-system and cannot always control application processing, new student entry and academic rules, regulations and policies at the university-level. However, considering that the transfer population has been the majority of the new student population in recent years, roughly two-thirds, it has become essential to do more to address transfers.

Moving forward, the College as a whole must place a greater focus on assessment. Current assessment efforts consist mainly of point-of-entry impressions along with the occasional survey or study. The College does not engage in longitudinal tracking of student populations which made it difficult for committees to find positive and negative trends. As a part of the project’s launch, steering committee members worked to create an inventory of all services and programs that were utilized by either part of the new student population. Unfortunately, there was little evidence to support what structures were most effective in engaging these populations and which are in need of improvement. It was also inconclusive with what affects the academic structures and the policies and procedures thereof have on incoming transfers—a major component to student satisfaction. Effectiveness has been typically gauged solely by attendance numbers. Though this has a certain value, it provides little insight into effectiveness of services, programs, and the academic needs that nearly all students need.

Channels of communication also need to be addressed, whether it is between College and student or between the different departments and offices that represent the College. Based on multiple committee reports, there is a clear need to create centralized sources of information on the College website. These would serve prospective students, students in their first-year, and students who have been at the College for a number of years. The current website contains scattered and conflicting information that does not present academic policies, resources, and services in any strategic or logical way. The lack of student support for Queens College email was also noted throughout many committees, reflecting a need to assess communication methods.

Faculty members, professional staff, and College leadership must all communicate more openly regarding their own interactions with students. This would help to clarify where new students have pitfalls, what has worked in dealing with new students, and what has not worked. While being open, these channels of communication must also be systematic to ensure that all members of the College have the same information which they can then communicate back to students. An effort must also be made to ensure staff, and all levels of faculty are educated about College policies and procedures. Additionally, the community would have to be willing to be honest and open about reviewing and then improving policies and procedures to consider more student-centered changes.
Future outreach efforts and marketing campaigns need to openly acknowledge strengths of the College and the makeup of its population. With its deep roots in the greater Queens community, growing academic programs, and wide spanning diversity, the College has potential to attract more students. Value is a major incentive for attending Queens College and this must be better communicated to students graduating from local secondary schools, community colleges, and other four-year institutions. Additionally, the definition and value of a liberal arts education must be at the forefront of our messages as the student generations increasingly become more functionality and vocationally-centered in their approach to education and do not have a firm grasp on what a liberal arts education is and how it is of lifelong benefit. This lack of understanding needs to be overcome if Queens College is to regain it share hold in comparison to colleges with more professional and career-oriented fields of study. Alternatively, the College may wish to explore development of such fields that would have a firm footing, however, in the liberal arts.

Finally committee discussions indicate a need to move away from a hands-off approach and to produce more direct interactions and interventions for both staff and faculty. Traditionally, the College has made efforts to make information available and provide resources through programs and services. Little effort however, has been made in helping students to navigate through sources of information and services, showing the positive effects of student involvement, or on the other hand the negative effects that a lack of initiative/involvement may have. In general, Queens College must do less telling to its students and more showing, but remain realistic in terms of what this will mean in terms of attention, support, and resources given. Much of that which is not being done or not as well done as it could be is not as a result of aptitude, disinterest, or apathy, but rather due to under-sourced and over-committed programs, services, and academic resources. Whether this results in more interventions, more programs, purposeful and student-centered policies and procedures, and academic needs met for incoming transfers is a thought to be addressed.
General Principles of the Foundations of Excellence

Principle 1: Prioritize recurring expenses in the first year to support FoE so as to generate revenue for this and other future activities (e.g. faculty hiring)

To ensure proper funding is available to support effective FoE initiatives, we propose to redirect up to $400,000 in recurring base-budget funding that ordinarily would go into 2012-13 general faculty/staff hires. The expectation is that these funds would be returned in the first year by a 1% increase in retention as shown in the table below. The charts below show the retention-revenue trends over time based on our strong current 87% freshman-sophomore retention rate and 79% one-year transfer retention rate. In subsequent years the return on investment could be up to $4 million with at 10% increase in retention. In part, these increased funds from retention would help pay for the resources necessitated by increased enrollment, including faculty. Note that the 70% figure in the data table is an attempt to isolate retention projection increases and any projected dollar return to the effect on upper-class students only.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revenue Enhancement Projection</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011-12 year data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>current tuition/year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Undergraduates in 2011-12 (fulltime FTE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current tuition revenue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Applies to X% of students (after freshman year)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Projected Retention Increase</th>
<th>Revenue Increment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td>$ -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1%</td>
<td>$ 408,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2%</td>
<td>$ 816,200</td>
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<tr>
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<td>$ 2,448,600</td>
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<tr>
<td>8%</td>
<td>$ 3,264,800</td>
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<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>$ 4,081,000</td>
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Principle 2: Work immediately on what can we do now without much money

Early initiatives will prioritize low-cost actions or ones already planned while the process of organizing longer-term actions occurs. Examples from various committees include:

- Award faculty dedicated to teaching and working with freshmen in the classroom (Faculty Committee)
- Creating transfer/first-year destinations on the website (Transitions Committee)
- Enlarge FYI so that all incoming first-years have the same entry experience
- Compose a document instructing faculty and staff on how to conduct basic queries in CUNYfirst to allow for easier assessment (Organization Committee)
- Host informal faculty focus groups – designed to inform faculty of services they may be unaware of, hear out their concerns (All Students Committee)
- Sit with the Transfer Unit of Admission and Academic Advising staff to get a full understanding of the academic and institutional pitfalls that transfer students encounter and be willing to work with faculty and staff on revising policies, procedures and cultures

**Principle 3: Continue to build on a culture of passion for student success**

One of the great successes of the Foundations project has already come through in the expanded camaraderie and collaboration that happened around various committee tables. The discussions that took place highlighted offices that often went unrecognized and reminded both faculty and staff of the great work their colleagues are doing; many of these channels were opened for the first time. It also increased the sense of belonging and purpose across the College.

Much as an intended purpose of this project is to increase communication and understanding of the student population, the College must also work to reunite faculty across the departments and divisions, and further coordinate staff and faculty. Obstacles to student success must be examined and passion for the degree must be enhanced through the classroom/degree, experiential education, and other activities. When the small things we do on an individual basis fit with the larger purposes, the organization will be effective for its students, even with necessarily limited resources.

**Principle 4: An excellent education for students is our mission**

The core academic operation is always at the top of our minds. Students must see the value of the degree in their minds and how the Liberal Arts and Sciences in the core curriculum enrich and enable the value of that degree. In every class, students must understand how that class connects to the liberal arts mission of the College and how it fits into the overall degree. They must also be challenged to think critically and to operate with intelligence on the subject matter whether in writing, in speaking, or in quantitative reasoning. They must bring to bear the cultural, linguistic, and knowledge diversity of the world and of the neighborhoods in Queens. Our teaching methods must be modern and robust and help to create the sense of wonder. We must embrace the web and technologies, but not be lost in it. Our course work must be accompanied by ways students can use that knowledge right now in abroad programs, internships, working with faculty on scholarship, in service of the community, etc.

**Principle 5: Students serve with us**

Moving forward, the project must be mindful of having students involved both in the implementation phase and in executing initiatives. Queens College can more actively foster student leadership by actively involving students throughout these initiatives. Then they can teach us about what our impact is and help us figure out how best to reach them so that retention improves.
Dimension Committee Reports

Philosophy First-Year

The philosophy committee examined the Queens College mission, most recently changed in 1995, as part of the committee’s research. This updated mission was developed in coordination with the rise of FYI.

Findings

According to the philosophy report, the most emphasized ideas in the current mission are, “the ideas of leadership in a global society, the liberal arts and sciences, critical thinking, addressing complex problems, exploring various cultures/cultural diversity, the use of technology and information resources, and serving commuting students.”

The mission also heavily touches on General Education but says little about experiences past the first-year. It is reflected heavily in the current mission statement of the Office of General Education, Academic Advising Center, and some general education requirements such as Cultures and Values. On the other hand, the committee felt the Office of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management did not directly intertwine with the mission. It emphasizes student experience and promotion of active learning, and community.

The mission statement is absent from the New Student Guide nor is it reflected in any language regarding College policies and procedures. In policies regarding religious observance, the mission should be linked due to the importance placed on Queens College for respect for diversity.

Recommendations of Philosophy Committee

1. Further link mission with that of Student Affairs mission
2. The mission should engage experiences of sophomores through seniors
3. Preserve the curriculum’s connection to the mission upon the implementation of CUNY Pathways
4. The mission should be easy to find on the College website
5. Enrollment measures should not erode students’ experience to the mission and as such, the College must be mindful of the size of faculty and staff, availability of classrooms, and enrollment numbers.

Philosophy Transfer

Findings

Transfer students are not explicitly mentioned in the mission statement. However, the philosophy committee does not feel it is quite necessary to craft a homogeneous experience for transfers. As most transfers enter the College ready to study a major and higher level coursework, departments should be mindful of the type of experience they would like their students to undergo.
The committee is concerned that transfers may be hurt most by CUNY Pathways. A weakening of general education may lead to more intensive major requirements as departments must be mindful of accreditation and certification requirements.

The most pressing concerns to crafting a cohesive transfer experience at the College is to ensure a robust advising structure.

**Recommendations**

1. Mandatory transfer workshops
2. Develop a philosophy between feeder colleges and coordinating majors at the College
3. Integrate evaluation of transfer experience into current departmental self-studies
4. Preserve the curriculum’s connection to the mission upon the implementation of CUNY Pathways
5. Address the gap between student’s arrival and declaration of major

**Organization First-Year**

**Findings**

The organization report states that the current organizational structure for the first-year is composed of discreet structures that are reasonably efficient but do have not an overarching council. Thus, integration and coordination between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs needs to be improved. We must help the students to become familiar with all the different problem solving centers such as the One-Stop Service Center, OCT, Bursar, AAC, Registrar, etc.

The role of CUNY in the admissions and academic process is also unclear and never directly addressed, nor is it made clear that Queens College is one part of a university system.

Orientation, the most visible program for first-year students is a lengthy and confusing process. Students must quickly learn about college life, academic policies, services/programs, financial information, registration, etc. Orientation is spearheaded mainly by Student Life, AAC, and FYI, which separate after orientation. It has also never been agreed on whether five courses or four courses should be the standard for new freshmen.

After orientation, students must essentially sink or swim. There appears to be a lack of awareness about available services, many students don’t check their qcmail, and introductory courses are often taught by adjunct faculty.

The committee was also tasked with looking at the funding structure for first-year. The structure itself and how funds are allocated is unclear. Funding is also dependent on enrollment and budgetary volatility.

**Recommendations**

1. Establish a new office: New @ Q – a center or program that could be home for both freshmen and transfer students along with new full-time and part-time faculty. To be overseen by an academic head. Would also have a comprehensive website for these students
2. Appoint a Dean of Undergraduate Studies, connected to Advising, other deans, faculty, and Student Affairs. Would be responsible for helping introduce students to majors and minors.

3. Craft a signature first-year. FYI for all freshmen with an embedded seminar of about six class sessions. Students would also take an additional seminar in second semester or second year.

4. Instructional Staff Handbook – Details grading procedures, attendance requirements, syllabi requirements, procedures for using Blackboard, regulations concerning P/NC, student appeal procedures, withdrawal procedures and faculty responsibilities, directions for referring students. Instructional staff would receive from department chairs who would sign off on being picked up.

5. Conduct longitudinal research projects to gather data on student progress at QC. Can become a function of New @ Q.

6. Make clearer the connection between CUNY and Queens College. The history of the CUNY system should be publicized and recognized.

7. Advising and guided registration for second semester.

8. Look at the SEEK orientation model.

9. New faculty orientations currently focus only on employment issues. They should also detail handling with students particularly for students new to the College.

10. Create tutorial documents to assist staff and faculty on how to conduct basic CUNYfirst queries and create datasets.

Organization Transfer

Findings

There is no single coordinating body for transfer students. New transfers are identified at point of entry and receive a welcome letter from the President, emails from Admissions, and also the Academic Advising Center. Peer Counselors from the Peer Support Services program also send out letters to new students inviting them to come in and talk to a peer about available services and the College itself.

Ninety-one percent of students go through transfer workshops which are not mandatory. Workshops can be long and exhausting for both student and advisor. However, this is typically the best chance for a student to get a sensible schedule. Unfortunately, quite a few students are only able to be advised the first week of classes due to the CUNY UAPC process, rolling admissions, and an overwhelming demand for workshops in a short duration of time. During this entry period, advisors also see all of incoming freshmen, re-entry students, and continuing students. Three hundred and sixty-five students were advised during the first week of classes in the Fall 2011 semester.

Students are still able to receive individual advising and resources are best divided to address population types. Students who enter with an AA/AS degree are advised separately as they are more ready to engage the major and have few general requirements to take. Elementary Education students also are advised separately due to the specific courses they must take.

Often students encounter hitches when securing official transcripts, processing credit evaluations, creating computer accounts, and processing in admissions. Students may also encounter Financial Aid issues if they register for courses that are not needed toward degree.
International students and students who enter from U.S. institutions that are not automatically evaluated by Admissions must go directly to faculty advisors who may not be available until the semester is well underway. The timeline for a full evaluation for these students—especially international students—varies.

These are frustrating issues to encounter as a new student; the transfer population has fewer services geared towards them, nor is any outreach done should they go into academic jeopardy.

Funding for the transfer organizational structure is clearly inadequate and there is no establishment of earmarked funds to assist transfers in navigating the complex system. All funding to assist transfers is handled within internal office/department budgets.

In terms of outreach, representatives from the Admissions Transfer Unit attended nine transfer fairs in Fall 2011. They attended Kingsborough, Hostos, QCC, Laguardia, BMCC, Bronx and other colleges including SUNY Westchester CC, Nassau CC, Orange County CC, and Dutchess CC

**Recommendations**

1. Again, establish a new office: New @ Q – see Organization first-year recommendation
2. Aim for 100% registration before classes start
3. Increased faculty availability during summer/winter sessions and readily available listings of such hours. This is the most important time for new student enrollment. Transfer days can also be created where students can meet and interact with faculty representatives
4. Create a counterpart to New Student Orientation Steering Committee for Transfers to begin the process of creating a more cohesive and robust transfer orientation with faculty assistance
5. Update articulation agreements on TIPPS, post agreements on QC website
6. Queens College should work with community colleges to promote the importance of getting an AA/AS degree when wanting to pursue baccalaureate work.
7. Include transfers as a population for office/department assessment.
8. Hire more professional advisors and create a team dedicated to working with students in their first-year at the College
9. Greater push for ePortfolio, already widely used at the community level
10. “Students for Students,” a student support team made up of second-year transfer volunteers who can assist new transfers to the College with things such as creating accounts, handling basic concerns, etc. These students would also help to identify concerns as a transfer and promote advocacy. This group could be adapted out of Peer Support Services
11. More student life outreach specifically targeting transfers such as a transfer club day
12. Create a mailing list for new transfers that can be distributed to departments and offices so they can send more targeted e-mails
13. Mid-semester tracking and follow-ups particularly for students having trouble adapting to college or who haven’t declared a major. Students could self-identify after being contacted by the institution. Counseling and Resource Center can spearhead programs to identify all at-risk students with emphasis on first-year and transfer
14. Save seats in gateway courses
15. Create a video for transfers to review regarding registration process, using computer accounts, availability of student services, etc.
16. Stronger relationship regarding transfers between Career Development and Academic Advising. Advising can provide lists of students and their selected majors to CDI who then can conduct outreach to ensure these new students are aware of CDI services

Learning First-Year

Findings

Committee examined strategic plan from 2008-2013 where five core values were listed. These included excellence, community, global perspective, accountability, and integrity. The College can advance programs by offering exceptional quality, developing and retaining faculty of international quality, implementing a model undergraduate curriculum, and infusing academic programs with a global perspective. As of now, few departments have articulated departmental goals or have plans in place for assessing progress.

FYI was redesigned for Fall 2010, transitioning from offering three linked courses to two. This change allowed for a tighter link between First-Year Writing and the respective linked courses, while also allowing more students to enroll in FYI. Enrollment typically falls within 60-75% of the incoming class, with more seats planned for Fall 2012. FYI creates a strong foundational experience for students while developing faculty relationships through collaboration and through development of common themes. English 110 is also regularly reviewed by the English department.

Perspectives has had a positive impact on the curriculum. Faculty are more involved due to the need to vet General Education courses. Writing curriculum has also been adapted across many courses. According to GEAC, all general education courses are to address how the discipline of the course construes data, evidence and acquires knowledge. There hasn’t been extensive assessment of Perspectives but committee felt it overall makes general education more cohesive. [Steering: With the 2013 introduction of CUNY Pathways, the College should place higher emphasis into student success assessment. Pathways is once again fostering increased faculty involvement in the general education curriculum due to a need to invent Pathways-style courses and adjusting current General Education coursework].

The committee put great emphasis on an overhaul of assessment initiatives in their report. Currently much assessment of student performance is taken from anecdotal perception, but assessment needs to be more empirically grounded. First, the committee would like to see a curriculum that is more learning goal centered. Faculty and staff should also be trained on performing outcome-based assessment. CUNYfirst and course evaluations can help. CUNYfirst makes finding grade information easy and can be used systematically. Course evaluations also function as indirect assessment.

The College is overly flexible on some aspects of learning. Syllabi are only recommended and not required. There is also much variation on levels of reading, writing, critical thinking, and analysis. [Steering: Syllabi are required by the state of NY]
Within the classroom, there is consensus that faculty do encourage students to ask questions and are available outside the classroom. Students would like to see more experiences that encourage critical thinking and would like further feedback on how they are performing. Faculty members are frustrated with students’ lack of preparedness for college level work. Based on course evaluations, students are also generally satisfied with courses. The areas that varied the most were course feedback, clarity of instructor, and interaction with students.

According to NSSE, students will perform better when they receive adequate support. There are few mechanisms for referring students and not enough is done to help struggling first-year students. Out of class learning is also generally not encouraged by faculty nor are opportunities to interact with other students encouraged.

A learning committee member queried CUNYfirst for a dataset of 496,131 grades from fall 2008 to spring 2011. Highest number of DFWI was at the 100 level. Division of Math and Natural Sciences had the most and Division of Education had the least.

Retention data is encouraging and students felt engaged once they came to the College. However data from IPEDS for spring 2011 showed a weaker graduation rate as percent of entering students, in comparison to comparable institutions. The College performed better on overall retention for full and part time students. The committee noted that increasing freshman enrollment would likely increase retention but may homogenize the student body.

There are a lot of complicated testing and placement issues. Different combinations of CUNY assessment exams, SAT, and Regents are used to assess proficiency. The Learning Committee would also like to see less of a reliance on Regents exams as method of proficiency measurement. Many students with low English proficiency will slip through simply by retaking English Regents multiple times. CUNY assessment exams are a more effective form of placement.

The system for determining who is coded as ESL is also very complicated, as is the transition from CESL to non-CESL student. English 095 can be better utilized for the transitioning group and Academic Support should ensure transitioning CESL students take English 110 earlier than later.

In producing their committee report, Learning also created an appendix of strong resources at the College for out of class learning. As an example of an out-of-class learning initiative, the committee highlighted the Urban Studies major/minor which has two courses, 101 and 370, that weave in out-of-class learning as a part of the course.

**Recommendations**

1. Develop Queens College libraries as fundamental learning resource to student success. Library can offer information on support services, serve as a collaboration area for faculty and students. New academic programs should coordinate with library to ensure availability of books, journals, etc.
2. Feature the library as a part of new student orientation
3. Develop College-wide repository for syllabi and assessment efforts
4. Create systems to track students struggling at 100-200 level
5. Establish a task force to make recommendations on placement and tracking. This group could study other institutions, identify underutilized mechanisms, discover courses that could integrate learning of academic skills, and develop transfer tracking mechanisms.

6. Create more opportunities for mentorships between faculty and students

7. Remove information on services and support from MyQC, such as tutoring hours.

8. One-Stop should provide info about availability of learning related services such as Career Development and Internships, Academic Support, Advising, Counseling, etc. It should also include a readily available online listing of resources that is user-friendly. Faculty should encourage students to use these resources

9. Provide deep and widespread support for faculty to collaborate and learn about teaching, i.e. workshops on classroom strategies for engagement. Create or revise spaces for collaboration efforts.

10. Increase opportunities for experiential learning and allow students to study topics in applied fields.

11. Need to develop resources for analyzing available data. Can use existing tools to generate datasets such as DFWI rates. [Steering: Institutional Research can easily analyze grade data]

Learning Transfer

Findings

Committee expressed concern over the effects of CUNY Pathways which they called overly invasive. Although spearheaded with the hope of improving the transition of transfer students, faculty members feel that this problem has been overly expressed in comparison to similar institutions. What will likely happen instead is a compromise of the intellectual import of the curriculum. On a more positive note, the committee was pleased to see widespread involvement in Pathways from QC faculty.

Getting a C- or better in composition at previous college will exempt incoming students from reading and writing. Anecdotal evidence shows that transfers with low qualifying grades in composition courses at the community level struggle in QC writing intensive courses. There is also no mechanism to track and intervene with these students

Transfers showed a need for more individualized attention from faculty and staff. Committee felt it would be appropriate to gear experiential education opportunities towards this population. This would not only add more value to their education but would also allow them to further connect with faculty and staff.

Recommendations

1. Support experiential education opportunities specifically for transfer students
2. Develop transfer tracking mechanisms
3. Consider more rigorous standards for composition grades when exempting CUNY Reading and Writing

Faculty First-Year

Findings
The faculty report produced that faculty involvement in first-year issues is available in a number of College forums including Freshman Year initiative, Center for Teaching & Learning, Writing Across the Curriculum, Academic Advising Center, Committee for Personnel & Budget, and in the Strategic Planning group. Active planning occurs across the divisions, especially across divisional honors programs which are Honors in Mathematics and Natural Sciences, Honors in the Social Sciences, Honors in the Humanities.

Retention has been linked with the growing of FYI and the committee feels many early courses today are strongly linked to general education rather than being solely a product of departments. There is however little analysis of contributions from faculty in teaching first-year students and it is not a point of emphasis in faculty reappointment.

The committee found difficulties in linking departmental advising with Academic Advising and felt the introduction of CUNYfirst has introduced additional bottlenecks that make departmental advising more difficult.

Departmental faculty members are often not familiar with first-year students due to lack of declaration in the first year. The committee looks to the example of divisional honors programs for helping to ease this gap. HMNS accepts about 25-30 per academic year, and students are introduced early to faculty for research options. They declare majors early, receive lab experience, and often go on to co-authorship on publications and possibly an honors thesis.

HTH and HSS both typically lead to a senior thesis; a thesis is also required of Macaulay Honors students.

**Recommendations**

1. Faculty Council of FYI – a group who would meet with FYI once per semester to provide departmental input and create initiatives that would guide towards majors
2. Make FYI universal for all incoming freshman
3. Expand honors programs to better integrate weekend and evening students
4. Faculty orientation should have a formalized set of outcomes for responsibilities to first-years
5. More faculty need to participate in CTL discussions
6. Assess integration between different FYI communities
7. Admissions should identify students interested in majors
8. Master Teacher initiative – veteran faculty who teach large intro sections to refocus departments on new students. Would work with multiple TAs, and discussion leaders

**Faculty Transfer**

**Findings**

According to the FoE faculty/staff survey, 61% expressed beliefs that institutional leaders did not or only slightly encouraged communication with counterparts at other institutions. The same question but of departmental leaders received a 56% response for did not or slightly encouraged. More needs to be done to foster these relationships. Queens College has met with provosts from QCC, Nassau CC, and
LaGuardia CC over transfer students and articulation processes. Some departments such as Accounting have also done individual outreach or introduced procedures regarding transferring of credit from feeder schools.

The Office of General Education also takes an active role in coordinating the setting of current policies and the facilitation of discussion between groups concerned with transfer such as UCC, GEAC, AQR, and WISC.

It is expected that CUNY Pathways will logically lead to increased communication between feeder schools and QC regarding the implementation of pathways to majors. This process may also lead to standardization of articulation procedures.

The committee was concerned about communication across campus. The College should create a systematic approach in communicating about transfers in college. The College needs to ensure the same information is spread to ensure consistency and faculty/staff should be communicated to directly instead of top-down – this leads to inconsistencies.

**Recommendations**

1. Admissions and Advising should encourage early major declaration.
2. Faculty should coordinate with Admissions to assess course offerings and raise the possibility of spare courses.
3. Departmental websites should discuss why the major is important and how it interacts with other majors. It should also give a timeline for when students should start the major and what classes to take initially. This will make it more attractive to transfers.
4. Mechanism for transfer similar to FYI for building community and context.
5. Create a major tracking system able to identify curricular bottlenecks. Can be coordinated between institutional advancement, Enrollment Management, Academic Advising Center.
6. Use UCC guidelines for implementing Pathways and current GenEd initiatives.
7. Establish a system of regular and systematic communication with non-CUNY schools.
8. Consider developing new courses for students who have not completed Pathways at point of transfer (ie. Students with 30 or less credits) that showcase ways of thinking and learning in different disciplines.
9. More trend forecasting from Admissions and Institutional Research. Majors, types (day, weekend, evening). Detailed student surveys should be conducted upon admission. [Steering: Additional staffing for Institutional Research would be needed to increase forecasting. Data can be prepared upon request].

**Transitions First-Year**

**Findings**

Students can learn about the College before attending through college fairs, campus tours, and open houses. 66% of students felt they understood major offerings based on an open house. Upon being
accepted, students receive one paper mailing from the President followed by electronic communications from Admissions and then Advising. Communication with parents principally occurs during the pre-entry phase and ends at orientation, where parents are encouraged to attend. Regarding new outreach, the committee would like to see the College reach out more to minority groups, particularly African American and Hispanic American families. The College should also be more proactive in using current students and alumni in outreach efforts.

Committee felt New Student Orientation (NSO) is overall successful but could be trimmed down to not overwhelm students. NSO is a valuable time for new students to interact with peers and continuing students, along with faculty and staff members. Student affairs professionals tend to be better represented than faculty. Academic Advising has been successful in the course planning part of orientation and serves new students well. Work must be done to ensure students retain information and prioritize other areas besides course planning and financial aid.

Electronic communication with new students hasn’t been particularly effective. College consistently relies on email which often comes off as spam to students. There are growing attempts to integrate blogs, YouTube, and Facebook but these efforts are not quite there. Committee recommended utilizing the 3Cs (communications, checklists, and comments) function on CUNYfirst. This inactive module allows faculty and staff members to include open comments to student (or internally to staff), add checklists such as filing for graduation process, or create communications which go to a group of student’s self-service center.

Handling of accounts also proves difficult for many students and the College needs to either simplify this process or do better to educate students on their purposes. Committee felt that there were too many information sources with some information presented through MyQC, departmental websites, the main College website, CUNYfirst, College must be more decisive in how and where it presents important information and what it deems important to begin with.

45% of students said they felt slightly or not at all connected to new students, and 45% did not feel connected to continuing students. Current programs in place to foster communication between continuing and new students include Peer Support Services, Project ExCEL, FYI, Welcome Day, Club Day, Academic Support Services, and Student Life programs and activities.

Student feedback also showed that many students felt faculty and staff members were unapproachable. Committee felt academic departments are not held accountable for meeting with students in regards to discussing major or areas of interest; many departments would only see students after the student had already completed some processes. 48% of students responded that faculty or staff had not discussed the student’s future plans including the possibility of transferring out. In not discussing long-term goals, the College misses opportunities to inform students of opportunities they may not be aware of, pre-engineering for instance. Approximately 40% of students felt that little effort was made to discuss what academic success meant at the College.

**Recommendations**

1. Create a media campaign across radio and television regarding student success. Show students speaking about academics, social, and community involvement. How did QC help?
2. Create a marketing campaign that supports diversity, reach out to African American and Hispanic American students. Show accomplishments of minority students and staff. [Steering: Also Asian students].

3. Consolidate all accounts or create possibility to create one account that activates all others. Account purposes and what order to claim needs to be clarified

4. Activate 3Cs function on CUNYfirst Student Center (see third paragraph)

5. Implement level of improvement that would make departments and offices more accountable for miscommunication.

6. Reduce email communications to first-year students

7. Create a family newsletter so parents are more aware of cultural activities campus provides

8. Engage alumni with current students. They can come and speak about experiences and also serve in mentoring roles, assist with recruitment

9. Conduct promotional events for individual academic departments

10. Include faculty throughout the new student orientation

Transitions Transfer

Findings

Queens College lacks a comprehensive website or destination for prospective/current transfers. Lehman and Hunter have created transfer centers to deal with such issues.

Students can use TIPPS to assess how credits will likely transfer over. However TIPPS can be inaccurate and outdated. The College also does not list College admissions requirements for transfers nor for entry into majors.

The Admissions Department attends roughly ten transfer fairs per semester to conduct outreach. College hosts campus tours four times a month for about ninety minutes each. QC has second largest transfer population in CUNY. Mean GPA is 2.76, average incoming credits is 65.8. Admissions also makes available roughly ten scholarships to new transfers every semester.

Timely processing through CUNY UAPC and Office of Admissions is essential to facilitating the transfer process smoothly. CUNYfirst has slowed down evaluations process, but the transfer credit report is readily available online once done. A delay in evaluation affects class standing and prerequisites and creates a more difficult advising process.

Academic Advising has a number of initiatives to help transition in transfers. Students can sign up for transfer workshop that includes a comprehensive PowerPoint followed by one-on-one advising. 34 sessions were conducted in Fall 2011 semester from May 6th to September 1st. The AAC also conducts transfer planning workshops going into the second semester and has sent out transfer newsletters to update new transfers on important dates. They also provide weekend and evening advising hours, along with the eAdvising service, a boon to non-daytime students which allows students to submit small queries to be answered by an advisor.
Transitions also highlighted the website of Financial Aid which has a wealth of links to on and off-campus resources. The office also offers book voucher programs, information on summer/winter aid, and information on applications. Students can also check the status of their application via online systems.

The ACE program (Adult College Education), SEEK, and John S. Murphy Institute for Worker Education conduct their own workshops for incoming transfers.

International students are given a preliminary credit evaluation by Admissions but must typically follow up with faculty advisors to evaluate blanket credits. These evaluations require a translated transcript and course descriptions. International students must also attend mandatory orientation through International Student Services explaining registration procedures, immigration policies, and adapting to NYC. They are then recommended to attend a regular transfer workshop.

Approximately thirty students transfer into the SEEK program per semester. Counselors within SEEK use a caseload model and stay with the student until they graduate and assist students with personal, academic, and professional counseling. SEEK also does offsite outreach to graduating College Discovery students.

Articulation agreements can be effective as is the case with the program between QC and QCC. Articulation would also benefit junior college students by better representing senior college expectations. Agreements are not represented on the website however.

Queens College has multiple publications including Transfer Credit Evaluation Guide and New Student Guide to familiarize new transfers with services. Language and information is not uniform however.

Concerns in faculty/staff survey that many transfers underprepared for rigors of Queens College. No current method to assess level of preparedness in place aside from a broad review of grades from prior institutions. The types of transfers that come also vary widely including students with an associate’s or bachelor’s degree, students with little college coursework, and students with over four years in coursework from multiple institutions who are looking for a fresh start.

The committee did note that transfers from other four-years tended to adapt better and wondered whether new transfers identified themselves as such to faculty.

**Recommendations**

1. Present admissions requirements for transfers in a more visible manner on website
2. Establish campus liaisons for popular majors
3. Create a TIPPS like system for non-CUNY schools, maintain and update TIPPS
4. Create checklists that allow transfers to assess their transition
5. Involve faculty into transfer workshops along with staff from financial aid, career development, student life, and The Summit
6. Gateway to Majors information guide
7. Scan transcripts digitally to faculty advisors to expedite faculty evaluations
8. Provide training for faculty on using CUNYfirst to evaluate and interpret transfer credit. Have more robust faculty advising during winter and summer months
9. Regular communication to transfers including the newsletter every semester
10. Run surveys at the end of campus tours
11. Establish a uniform advising model amongst transfers and professional advising staff. Consider running a caseload model in AAC
12. Allocate adequate physical and staff resources for a transfer unit that provides prescriptive, developmental advising
13. Coordinate transfer workshops with special programs workshops to assure best practices
14. Create an academic preparedness assessment tool to assist in advising recommendations
15. Reserve seats in high-demand courses and gateway to major courses
16. Create a transfer club, transfer coordinator position responsible for developing connections between transfers and other students/faculty/staff
17. Departments can run social/informational programs for new transfers
18. Consider developing transfer focuses in popular majors

All Students First-Year

Findings

The All Students group reported on the academic, social, and safety needs of students. On the New Student Survey, 58.5% of respondents rated the College high or very high on meeting academic needs. While this number is acceptable, it shows room for improvement.

Faculty members received praise in the student comments section and were rarely criticized. The committee also highlighted the wealth of majors and minors available along with an interdisciplinary option. Responses to the faculty/staff survey showed a lack of awareness or dissatisfaction with student support services such as tutoring, the writing lab, etc.

The College is doing well with some special populations, particularly athletes, students with physical or learning disabilities, and honors students. On the other hand, the College is not doing as well with students of ethnic and racial minorities and students with academic deficiencies (the lowest scoring group at 41%).

The College scored a 77.1% (high or very high) on meeting the unique needs of honors students. Freshman Honors students and Macaulay Honors students are placed in classes together which results in a community of high-achieving learners.

The College scored a 67.1% (H or VH) on meeting the unique needs of athletes. The Division II program is thriving and many athletes are eligible to live in The Summit.

The College scored a 56.7% (H or VH) on meeting the unique needs of students with disabilities. There is strong support from the Office of Special Services and Committee for Disabled Students. OSS also seems to have effective outreach to faculty as they send mailings to faculty every year about their services.

The College scored a 48.9% (H or VH) on meeting the unique needs of students of racial and/or ethnic minorities. Despite strong support for this population from the Office of Minority Affairs and Pre-
Professional Advisement along with Project ExCEL, faculty and staff seem unaware of these support services. The committee also noted that the Office of Minority Affairs is understaffed despite the amount of services and outreach it manages to provide.

Social Needs - Only 41.1% of students rated the College high or very high on meeting their social needs. 45.8% (H or VH) felt they belonged. 60% felt comfortable expressing beliefs without fear of reaction.

Students are made aware of activities and opportunities during orientation, through peer letters, and through the new student guidebooks. There are over 100 clubs and organizations on campus. These groups represent interests, majors, religions, and minority groups. Student Life also helps coordinate Welcome Day which draws about 1200 students per year and Club Day which draws about 2000 students.

Safety Needs – 68.8% (H or VH) of students said they felt safe on campus. There is a large staff of peace officers, many of whom are trained in CPR; emergency “blue boxes” are also visible around campus.

**Recommendations**

1. Conduct focus groups with faculty not only to inform them of current support services but to address areas they feel needs improvement
2. Conduct focus groups with students to determine what programs they would like to see to feel more a part of Queens College

All Students Transfer

**Findings**

50.4% of students (H or VH) felt they were welcomed by the College. Many transfers have a frustrating entry and registration. They feel little faculty are available for transfer credit evaluation and they have few courses to choose from when they can actually register.

On serving transfer students, only 40.9% rated the College high or very high in the faculty/staff survey. There is low individual attention (28.8%) and respondents did not feel transfer students were aware of campus opportunities for involvement (38.4%)

The College scored 55.4% regarding equitable treatment for transfers. While this is promising in that transfers often receive the same quality of service as a native student, it also likely points to the lack of transfers being identified as such.

The committee broadly suggested that the College needs to improve its relationship between faculty and transfer.

**Recommendations**

1. Welcome Day in spring semester
Diversity First-Year and Transfer

Findings

“Our key finding is that while Queens College campus is diverse, we do not, as an institution take advantage of that diversity in appropriately meaningful ways. Our diversity efforts are passive, rather than active and the buffet style approach does not meet the FoE benchmark of ‘assuring that first-year students experience diverse ideas and world views.’”

Current active diversity initiatives include free hour activities, The Summit, the network of clubs and organizations, the growing athletics program, and partnerships with community institutions. QC has partnerships with the Center for Ethnic, Racial, and Religious Understanding, Hillel, Newman Center, John D. Calandra Italian American Insitute, Asian American Center, Asian American & Asian Research Institute, Center for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies. The College should continue to foster more partnerships as these are looked favorably on by local, federal, and state government.

Due to the limited opportunities for on-campus engagement, the diversity group would like to see more academically based initiatives. [Ed. The CUNY Pathways model provides less incentive and less room for students to examine diversity in the classroom]. The College should also consider the lack of vetting that occurs with many introductory courses taught by part-time faculty.

Committee included data from the survey but felt the information isn’t truly indicative of a first-year experience. The findings of the FoE survey also differed from NSSE, which asked whether diversity interactions had meaningful impact. QC did not score as favorably on the NSSE diversity questions.

Faculty/Staff survey seemed more complimentary to current diversity efforts. 71% of faculty/staff said QC is doing a great job in facilitating diverse interactions compared to 43% of students. Faculty/Staff scored the College 57% on access to diverse faculty compared to 28.4% of students.

Most students believe that Queens College exposes students to world cultures, religions, and political perspectives. Where Queens College continuously struggles is in creating interactions with members of the outside community.

The committee felt the diversity of the campus was a gift from the community and not a result of the College’s actions. However QC could become a reflecting pool of New York by bringing in experts from different cultures and bringing the campus community to different cultural events.

Recommendations

1. College leadership should make strategic commitments rather than overextend itself
2. Diversity efforts should be considered in all evaluation processes
3. Start with attainable requirements and increase difficulty over time
4. Consider an academic diversity requirement, accomplished through multiple options. Students can give a diversity presentation as part of an independent study, students can explore a culture outside of their own, or diversity can be built into syllabi with faculty facilitating conversations on diversity, including guest speakers, or talking about their own cultural experiences
5. Create a matching program for clubs and organizations that would match two together. The semester or year could end in a festival discussing the different matches
6. Create a diversity task force to plan and sponsor diversity initiatives on and outside of campus
7. Plan trips to cultural events such as Chinese New Year, San Gennaro Festival
8. Create service experiences such as trips or internships in connection with the UN or US government representatives to learn about national models of diversity

Roles and Purposes First-Year

Findings

When it comes to developing out-of-class learning and learning for self-growth, QC often takes the hands-off approach. It makes information available, but needs more opportunities to model the benefits and show the strengths of various programs. The College does too much telling and not enough showing.

QC needs to work on recognizing strengths. There are a wealth of strong academic programs that tackle nearly every sector of education that students may be interested in (pre-engineering a good example). Although the transition to QC from high school may be “softer” in comparison to other institutions, this can be taken as a plus. Many students value how embedded QC is in the greater community, and its goal of providing an affordable and rigorous education. Is this communicated enough to prospective students?

Committee found that Perspectives does a good job of explaining the rationale of general education, as do many of the College competencies. According to the Freshman Survey of Fall 2010, first-year students put a very high value in writing effectively, developing leadership skills, thinking critically, and learning to be well-rounded. The core general education spans many areas of interest and contexts to help develop well-rounded students. There was a concern however that the amount of actual writing intensive courses offered semester to semester is relatively small compared to the amount of courses designated as W courses. Implementation of Pathways will require a revisiting of Queens College’s rationale for general education.

Areas of out-of-class learning include the large numbers of clubs and organizations (many of which do work in the community), the growing Education Abroad and National Student Exchange options, a greater focus on experiential education, and the yearly service learning project. While many of these are strong, the College has few activities or opportunities that truly feel unique or tailor made for QC students. Regarding preparation for employment, the options seem available. Are students aware that there are internship courses, faculty advising to discuss career options, options to work with faculty on research, etc.? The yearly CDI assessment showed 5% of the students they served identified as freshmen. Are students “learning to prepare” for employment or do they wait till senior year?

Committee expressed concerns that the motto is weakly developed in the minds of students. Although there are strong service programs such as Division of Education, FNES, GSLIS, Psychology, etc. more needs to be done to make the motto a part of the College experience.

Recommendations
1. Make second semester seminar a fixture of first-year student experiences
2. Communicate more through social media instead of only email
3. Rebrand Club Day
4. Dedicate one to two months of the academic year to Student Development. One week can be spent on clubs/organizations, another on pathways to careers, etc.
5. Establish a defining academic experience that is mandatory to complete (similar to Bennington College’s Field Work Term). Internship, extensive research project, thesis?
6. Consider establishing an office devoted entirely to internships
7. Aggressively promote internship courses embedded in the major
8. Promote Education Abroad and National Student Exchange more extensively
9. Create an online guide designed to guide students towards available services
10. Mandate advising not only at point of entry but at various points such as junior year
11. Create communications that will go out to different cohorts at beginning of year
12. Introduce students to TAships as a method of funding graduate study
13. Craft a pre-semester introduction. Students will read a number of articles which will then be discussed in small groups with former FYI students, faculty, mentors, etc. Students can also be given a mandatory writing assignment on first day of English 110 in relation.

Roles and Purposes Transfer

Findings

By and large, more information about available programs and services are given to first-year over transfers. Committee felt transfers may get glossed over as they are harder to identify and target. Nevertheless, they are the majority of new students. It is worth noting however that many transfers find QC a good fit as these students are still able to continue their education despite having time-intensive obligations outside the campus.

Transfers have many of the same opportunities to enroll in programs as first-year students but miss out on many “first-year” programs. They have few opportunities to develop relationships with students entering the same period as themselves.

Performance Indicators for Transfer purposes section reflected a focus on preparing for employment and graduate study. Committee found that many departments do a commendable job reflecting what kinds of opportunities students can pursue by following that area of study. As this information is embedded in the departmental home page, it may be easily glossed over however by prospective and current undeclared students.

The CUNY Pathways initiative may have the effect of streamlining transfer within CUNY.

Recommendations

1. Transfer Initiative – A counterpart to FYI that like FYI, bundles two courses, one of which could be a W course. Also would help to develop stronger transfer cohorts
2. Develop an online transfer handbook with links to TIPPS, DegreeWorks, a breakdown of general education, articulation agreements, and links to departmental websites
3. Create transfer orientation days that allow new transfers to meet peers, faculty, staff
4. Create a Transfer Students Office staffed by individuals familiar with transfer registration, TIPPS system, transfer advising, etc.
5. Develop the website more cohesively

Improvement First-Year

Findings
According to the Current Practices Inventory (CPI), QC had 1,524 full time, degree-seeking first year students for Fall 2010 through Spring 2011. There are, according to the CPI, 27+ programs and initiatives that are in place to assist first year students with their academic success. The most successful of these are the Freshman Orientations, the Freshman Year Initiative program and the supporting FYI services that include the English 110 course, the English 110 Intervention and the English 110/Library instruction program. All other initiatives have relatively low participation, low attendance and low levels of assessment.

Admirably, there is a panoply of programs and initiatives directed at addressing diversity, economic, social justice and academic preparation concerns. The diversity programs include; Adult Collegiate Education, Asian Initiatives, Project ExCEL, and the SEEK (The Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge) program. The programs that address the economic gaps are: Child Development Center, Health Services Center, and the Office of Special Services for Students with Disabilities. The programs that address social justice concerns, which may include gaps in educational preparation are Murphy Institute's Worker Education Program and the Counseling Center. Programs that assess the students' academic level in order to place them in the correct courses and programs are the COMPASS Exam, Course Evaluations, and the Freshman Honors Program. There are other initiatives that foster student engagement and cross-cohort connections such as Welcome Day and Club Day.

Very few of these are initiatives are structured to directly track and impact the continuous improvement of the educational mission. The only one that comes close is the Course Evaluations application. However there is no evidence or publically available data that anything is being done with the information students are providing us from these surveys. A recommendation would be to have a visual/virtual knowledge management directory of campus subject matter experts on the College website, in addition to the telephone directory.

The Campaign for Success document, #60 in Evidence Library discusses methods of improving service areas, particularly Academic Advising and Student Support Services. The document, citing data from the mid-2000s however is not up to date. There are also no general repositories available regarding first year student success.

Our retention rate in the first year is relatively high when compared to our Carnegie class and our Select Six institutions. Retention moving past the second year does not fare as well. Therefore, we cannot easily determine what went wrong, or what skills, knowledge and what dispositions they did not pick up in their
first year or what environmental factors is effecting their success. Unfortunately, we do not have the ability to easily triangulate the students' grades with the students' learning outcomes or the survey data we collect on them.

NOTE: In a response for a request for comment, issued by us to Betsy Griffin, our Gardner Institute Advisor, she noted something in the Evidence Library, item #75 that we found interesting. We felt it was a worthwhile observation that merited consideration for improving retention in the second year. She observed, "Is Second Semester Freshman Seminar a required part of general education (or will it be since it is new)? This course reminds me somewhat of Flagler College's spring semester Keystone 101 that has a critical thinking component. Given the typical higher spring-to-fall drop rates, having a spring intervention that increases student connections as well as enriches them academically is desirable". We agree.

**Recommendations**

1. QC groups in service to freshmen should seek out best practices from comparable institutions.
2. QC should capture and aggregate formative assessment data on student learning outcomes (SLOs). Faculty can then assess student performance and push that data towards students’ academic success.
3. QC should make more use of program and initiatives assessment data.
4. QC should commit to capturing institutional wide student learning outcomes. Faculty can use learning outcomes to make just-in-time decisions to respond to students' academic needs.
5. Develop a catalog of student learning outcomes that reflect the institutional vision, program mission, and course goals for our graduates and track their attainment and development of those outcomes over time. QC should consider integrating and align the student learning outcomes in the Pathways program. Not only should Pathways be integrated also learning outcomes from NY State SPAs and federal and accrediting organizations into the courses, programs and general curriculum.
6. Peer mentors could be assigned based on incoming students’ majors. Peer mentoring has shown to have a high success rate on increasing retention. Students with undeclared majors should be assigned to a general mentor.
7. Embed student participation surveys in programs and initiatives to gather more data relating to first year satisfaction. The questions need to be better focused to give us the level of specificity that we need. We need to gather data from students who have left the College for whatever reason in order to address those issues identified. It would be useful to gather data from new student orientations, campus visits, etc. The data should be in the same information system as the learning outcomes data so we can cross-reference.
8. Make available a directory of institutional and academic resources for students. We need to have a publically available directory the institutional and academic resources for first year students, grouped by program/major, department, and services at point of need. This directory should be dynamic and current - easily updated and disseminated through email, social media, etc.
9. We should assess students academic strength before and after the first-year. This data should be in the same system as the learning outcomes data so we can cross reference. In the case of transfer students already utilizing e-Portfolios, access to student portfolios by QC faculty might assist with the assessment of the students community college work.
10. QC should have a professional development program which includes professional conference attendance. One suggestion would be to centralize training and conference attendance within the
HR department in order to maximize limited resources and centralize the tracking of human capital development.

Improvement Transfer

Findings

Committee found there is no central location for assessment of outcomes and initiatives. Prior studies such as NCATE and Middle States also do not easily distinguish between first-year and transfer students. There is also no feedback loop; when assessment is done, the feedback is often not used to improve initiatives.

Currently the fact book is the main source of information on transfers and includes information on gender, age, enrollment numbers, feeder schools, degrees pursued. The fact book is distributed to members of the College including the president, vice presidents, deans, department chairs and directors, but is not actively pushed to all faculty and staff.

Performance indicators for improvement asked for responses to many areas that had insufficient data. Per example, the College has little knowledge of transfer behavioral patterns outside of NSSE surveys. The little data that is available specifically to transfers is disaggregated, making it difficult to use in improvement measures.

More attention needs to be given to assess student learning outcomes and information that may impact their learning such as academic performance, in-place initiatives, social conditions, environmental factors, cultural background, and behavior off and on campus. Transfer students are overall satisfied with transfer workshops, the transferring of credits, and the advising they receive.

Center for Teaching & Learning spearheaded a major initiative through ePortfolio since last year known as “Making Transfer Connections.” Faculty, staff, and students participated in numbers not exceeding a few hundred. E-Portfolio has an assessment tool known as Chalk and Wire that is currently in use by the Division of Education for accreditation purposes.

The committee believes a move away from the credit system and grades as the central source of student tracking and assessment. Rather look to assessment tools available through ePortfolio that assess learning and development in a more holistic manner.

As a whole, the committee felt the curriculum and policies are weighed towards the experiences of students who enter as freshman.

Recommendations

1. Future assessment should be done with feedback loops and focus groups
2. Collect and aggregate student learning outcomes in a non-intrusive way
3. Do not rely on credit system as means of assessing what is being learned
4. Use tools built into ePortfolio, Grading Rubrics and Assessment for Learning
5. Sponsor more events and advising efforts geared towards majors
6. Create departmental and campus wide social events to welcome transfers and allow them to connect with other students
7. More evening and weekend hours for student services
8. Use student mentors as a resource to assist transfers and freshman
9. Consider charging a nonrefundable fee that is included in tuition fees for new students to ensure more attend a transfer workshop
10. More departmental advising for top ten majors
Committee Specific Recommendations

These draft recommendations are listed in a rough order of importance. They are based on the reports of the nine Dimension Committees and the excellent work of the faculty, staff, and students involved. In some instances, the Steering Committee went beyond and changed a specific recommendation to better reflect what the Steering Committee thought was the entire FoE Task Force Finalized recommendations will be integrated into the 2013 Strategic Plan Recommendations will be revised appropriately by RIC to be CUNY Pathways compliant.

1. **Create a permanent retention implementation committee that we recommend calling the Excellence in Transition Committee (ETC).** The ETC would not only be charged with implementing the recommendations in the final report below, but would also be charged with updating or changing the plan in reaction to the changing situation at Queens College in part, brought on by the implementation of the points below. ETC would also be responsible for reading through departmental self-studies. The ETC would include the Vice Presidents, but not be chaired by them. It would also include a representative of the Deans, the student service organizations, two Department Chairs, two undergraduate student representatives, and others from faculty and staff. It ordinarily would be about 11-15 people and would be assisted by a College Assistant Staff person. The ETC would administer the recurring budget outlined in the first principle. It would issue at least yearly reports on retention progress and updates to the plan. The ETC would report directly to the President who would appoint all of its members ordinarily to 2 year terms.

2. **Establish a Transfer Student Office.** As recommended by the Organization Committee, we recommend the establishment of an office for new transfer students. We did not use the “New @ Q” name, although it is catchy, because we do not think such an office is as necessary for first-year students that are handled by the FYI program, Advising, General Education, and other offices. Such an office would be headed by a HEO (or equivalent), have an adequate staff, be responsible for coordinating the experience of transfer students in all of the offices and operations of the College, particularly in the first year. Such offices would include, Admissions, One-Stop, Advising, and Student Life.

3. **Improve College website and process of updating policy information.** Within two years, develop a website navigation structure that will effectively work with prospective and new students. Implementation Committee would examine survey data from relaunch of website in 2009 and work with Communications and OCT to keep all parties involved. Website should be more interactive, structured and have less information that is locked away. The College must also return to the practice of developing yearly bulletins as opposed to addendums to past bulletins. College will also make available a Faculty Handbook, updated yearly, that details grading procedures, attendance requirements, syllabi requirements, procedures for using Blackboard, regulations concerning P/NC, student appeal procedures, withdrawal procedures, faculty responsibilities, and provides directions for referring students.

4. **Create a College Academic Communications Information Manager and Maintainer.** This person develops, maintains, and manages continuous stream of academic communication to ensure accuracy, effectiveness, timeliness and availability of academic information. They would also serve as a
researcher and troubleshooter for inaccurate, incongruent, unclear policies, language, and information. Connects to Advising Center, Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, Academic Senate, General Education Office, academic departments, Editorial Services, Undergraduate Bulletin, Registrar, DegreeWorks, CUNY Registrar. The Academic Communications Manager (point five) will ensure that all information sites and materials are current and allow us to eliminate the MyQC feature.

5. **Signature First-Year.** Building on the foundation of the current FYI program, a second semester seminar component should be added focusing on writing and speaking skills. A third component, an introduction to college seminar would be added as part of the student’s first semester, comprised of about ten one-hour class sessions. FYI would become mandatory of all first-year students. College should commit to make teaching of first-year students a requirement to tenure and faculty promotion in an effort to further promote faculty and student relationships.

6. **Expand the Advising Center.** Add staffing and adjust current staff to the Center considering the central role of its responsibilities with regard to retention. Bring students per advisor caseload down to be more in-line with national standards. Restructuring will allow Advisors to better approach each advising session in a developmental manner and thus help drive retention.

7. **Support and enhance the One Stop Service Center.** Provide additional support to the center director. Hire an Assistant Director on a Higher Education Assistant line (HEa) to help with daily operations, management of the permanent call center and evening coverage.

8. **Implement more forward-thinking teaching practices and greater learning outcome assessment.** The College must further explore cutting-edge teaching practices to further inspire students. We must increase the strength of the Center for Teaching and Learning to allow for more opportunities for faculty collaboration, commit to assessed experiments in hybrid and web-enhanced teaching, increase our assessment of teaching by all sensible means including student course evaluations and peer teaching reviews, and establish excellent communication on teaching practices between faculty who were often trained as scholars but less so as teachers. We must also further expand on our efforts to integrate student learning outcomes into the classroom. This would require a revival of the in-place Outcomes Assessment Committee.

9. **Leverage the Diversity of our Student Population.** Given the already strong diversity that Queens as a borough provides, the College must actively engage this diversity to further expose students to other cultures. Wide-spanning diversity is a signature quality of Queens College, as such this recommendation includes multiple initiatives. The College must continue to proactively hire diverse faculty across the disciplines. The college must also encourage active exposure through initiatives such as a club-matching program (as suggested by the Diversity Committee) and through further developing relationships in the greater community. Models for this are organizations such as the Center for Ethnic, Racial, and Religious Understanding that actively brings in cultural representatives to the campus and brings students outside of the campus to engage in cultural events. The College must aggressively diversify its marketing campaigns to further promote the success of students of racial and ethnic minorities. Finally, diversity should become an active component of internal assessment studies and ongoing assessment practices.
10. **Expand Experiential Education.** Want to see 50% participation in undergraduate experiential opportunities within five years. Increased offerings of Internships, Abroad Programs, Service-Learning opportunities, Undergraduate Research, will better establish connections to the student’s major, enhance the process of student self-discovery in college, and connect students to potential careers or continued education. From furthering their pre-med and pre-law aspirations to securing employment after college, students crave the connection between what they learn in the classroom and its application to a larger world even within the college itself. By expanding current offerings, we can leverage that interest to gain more and better attention to the classes, improve the security of choice of major, and better connect to what happens after graduation, all of which should improve retention to graduation particularly in the sophomore to senior years. *Please refer to the Appendix in the full Learning report for a further discussion of current experiential education opportunities and challenges.*

11. **Double the size of the non-Macaulay Queens College Honors program.** Through the work of Honors in the Humanities, Honors in Social Sciences, and Honors in Math and Natural Sciences, we need to expand honors programs as a whole. In addition, we must:
   a. Improve (e.g. double) success rates of pre-med and pre-law programs so as to provide better connection with careers, provide clear peer leadership in the pursuit of high-end career goals, and better public relations opportunities on and off campus.
   b. Increase the number of national awards that students are vying for to further expose the amount of successful students that rise through the College.
   c. Make better use of honors students as peer leaders, counselors, mentors, discussion leaders in large course, etc. Such activities not only spread the effects of leadership around campus and have a highly positive effect on the students who are doing the leading.

12. **Students for Students support group.** Remold underutilized student groups such as Peer Support Services and seasonal groups such as Orientation Leaders to become a support group geared towards transitioning students. Peers (or other student leaders) could be assigned a small cohort of five or so students to work with during their first year. Students could also provide direct interaction and information services such as helping sign up for new student accounts, and other issues that may arise as students are adjusting. Developing this group would require initial coordination between the Counseling Center, Student Life, FYI, etc. This group could also report back to the same groups to inform about pitfalls.

13. **Create a Student Development Month.** Develop yearly or semiyearly periods dedicated to exposing students to opportunities dedicated to student development. It could integrate already established programs such as Welcome Day, Club Day, Major/Minor Fair, etc. and create a more cohesive structure that link these programs together while also providing the opportunity for new programs. There is a critical early period for engaging and grabbing attention for new students that we must leverage.

14. **Revamp New Student Orientation.** Follow up with current orientation survey data and study impact of orientation on new first-year students. Examine ways to cut down on the amount of information provided the day of orientation. Streamline the number of presenters and the top-heavy presentations by administrators. Continue to provide more pre-orientation materials and/or video instructions.
15. **Assessment.** To ensure FoE initiatives are successful, assessment must be done to coincide with any implementation and to track any changes in retention and enrollment. Moving forward, College should establish an overarching Assessment Office to organize assessment activities and staff the office appropriately. Implementation Team (ETC) should also examine the recently available peer data from FoE surveys to allow for more targeted recommendations. This data is available on the FoEtec website.