



Queens College

City University of New York

Periodic Review Report

June 1, 2002

Executive Summary

Introduction - Institutional Overview

Throughout its 65-year history, Queens College has held to the promise of its earliest mission. Founded in the depths of the Great Depression, Queens was hailed as the “College of the Future,” with the goal of providing a “truly liberal arts education that would produce graduates who understood the world they were about to enter and would be ready to take their place as useful members of society” (*The People’s College on the Hill*, 1987, p. 49). Our motto is *discimus ut serviamus* – we learn in order to serve.

Queens College, one of eleven senior colleges in the City University of New York (CUNY), serves over 15,300 undergraduate and graduate students at the bachelors and masters levels. Almost 75 % of our students come from the Borough of Queens, one of the most ethnically diverse counties in the nation, with a population of over 2,220,000. Most other students come from neighboring New York City boroughs and suburban Long Island; 10% are from Nassau County. Queens College is a commuter college, although an increasing number of students find housing in nearby neighborhoods.

Remarkably, our students arrive at Queens from 130 different countries and speak 67 languages. Almost half were born outside the United States and over 44% are first-generation college students. The majority work full or part-time. Half the new students admitted to Queens College are transfer students, largely from CUNY community colleges and Nassau Community College. Yet our admissions standards continue to increase and are among the highest in CUNY.

The College offers more than 70 undergraduate majors and minors, including innovative programs in the arts, humanities, education, mathematics, and the natural and social sciences, as well as courses of study in journalism and a unique business and liberal arts program that integrates liberal arts studies with the world of work. The curriculum

includes the largest and arguably most successful teacher education program in New York City; a respected Graduate School of Library and Information Studies; one of the nation's largest nutrition programs, and other programs with national reputations, including music, art history, and psychology. The Ph.D. is offered in a consortial model with the CUNY Graduate School and University Center.

The College prides itself on the strength of its faculty, many of whom are world-renowned scholars, researchers, and artists. The faculty includes 540 full-time and 550 part-time and graduate teaching members. All participate in research, service, and the challenge of teaching a richly diverse student body and ensuring that they receive a first-rate and affordable college education.

Queens College Achievements since 1995

Transitions in the leadership of the University's Board of Trustees and its Chancellery occurred during the late 1990's. Dr. Mathew Goldstein was appointed Chancellor of the City University beginning Fall 1999. After five years as President of Queens College, Dr. Allen Lee Sessoms resigned in August 2000. During Dr. Sessoms' term many successful initiatives were undertaken by the faculty of the College and a number of important policy changes were enacted by the University and implemented by the College as detailed in this Report. However, the College also experienced a significant drop in student enrollment and retention during Dr. Sessoms' tenure and developed multi-million dollar deficits, particularly in 1999 and 2000.

In September 2000 Dr. Russell K. Hotzler was appointed Interim President of Queens College and initiated a reorganization that encompassed the appointment of new senior administrative and academic personnel and a restructuring of many College functions, particularly those that focused on student and academic program support. These initiatives, continuing to emphasize academic standards, have resulted in improved student enrollment and retention, and restored fiscal stability. A new Master Plan for CUNY has reinvigorated the University and the College. The future leadership of the College has also been established with the recent appointment of Dr. James Muyskens as the new President of Queens College effective July 29, 2002.

Fiscal Stability

Although revenue shortfalls forced aggressive cost-cutting in non-essential areas, the College was determined to protect the core educational, recruitment, and retention functions. Efficiencies were realized through office consolidation and all-funds budgeting, making it possible to identify all funding sources and optimize the use of funds to meet important goals. Adjunct funding was based not on tradition, but on balancing need with available instructional resources.

A new emphasis on recruitment and retention has increased enrollments in the last two years. In addition, revenue from external grants and contracts as well as private donors has been increased. The result of these efforts is that, after enduring a difficult period in the late 1990's, the College has repaid its accumulated debt and balanced the operating budget, and its fiscal future appears secure. This increased stability has made it possible

to hire increasing numbers of new faculty (40 this year alone) to rebuild and rejuvenate professorial ranks.

Administrative Changes

At the administrative level, shared governance has been reinforced: the College leadership meets regularly with appropriate faculty committees to provide them with current financial information and to encourage open communication and participation.

The Academic Senate has reorganized its operations to increase campus awareness of its activities, review the duties, membership, and operation of its committees, and increase the effectiveness of its deliberations.

A new Office of Undergraduate Studies and Retention coordinates College activities related to undergraduate students, including outreach, recruitment, advising, retention, curriculum, freshman and transfer programs, and honors programs.

A new Assistant to the Provost for Graduate Studies and Research guides development of new masters degree and certificate programs, maintains graduate scholastic standards, and handles CUNY-faculty relations, including equipment funding, new faculty start-up funds, grant coordination and development, and intellectual property matters.

Many of the College's development activities are handled by a new Vice-President for Institutional Advancement.

Computer operations have been integrated under a new Office of Information Technology. A new Assistant to the Provost for Information Technology coordinates technology resources and computer-assisted learning, including CUNY Online, a consortium which is developing enhanced and asynchronous courses. Use of course management software (Blackboard) has grown rapidly and frequent faculty workshops are offered. We have made substantial investments in our information infrastructure, enabling increasing incorporation of technology into the classroom and the daily activities of students, faculty, staff, and administration.

The Library has successfully maintained availability of information in the face of limited new resources through mechanisms such as joint purchasing arrangements. New electronic databases are now provided. Electronic reserve and proxy servers make course and other materials available to users everywhere at all times.

A new Weekend College, enabling working New Yorkers to earn a college degree on weekends in selected disciplines, including accounting, psychology, sociology, and interdisciplinary studies, now enrolls over 1200 students.

Academic Achievements

Significant changes have been made in key academic programs: The School of Education, formerly part of the Division of Social Sciences, has become a division with its own dean. This change reflects the College's concern with improving teacher education programs, which account for 25 % of enrollment. In response to a New York State mandate, all education programs were revamped and re-registered or newly registered. This complex process included 71 undergraduate, post baccalaureate, and graduate programs in elementary and secondary education, content disciplines, and joint

programs with community colleges. The re-registration engaged the entire campus in an examination of teacher education, particularly of general education requirements in the liberal arts and sciences, which, for elementary education majors, now exceed College requirements. Faculty in each teacher education program area revised their programs to reflect new requirements in pedagogy and field experiences for teacher candidates.

Other new academic programs have been created in many disciplines and across disciplines. Reconstituted foreign language departments emphasize cultures and literatures as well as language acquisition. Faculty from two departments were combined into a new Department of Family, Nutrition, and Exercise Sciences, enabling development of new major and master's degree programs in nutrition and exercise sciences. The former Department of Communication Arts and Sciences split; one component formed the Department of Media Studies and the other merged with an existing department to form the Department of Linguistics and Communications Disorders. The Department of Geology reconfigured itself as a School of Earth and Environmental Sciences allied with faculty in the sciences and social sciences.

A new college writing requirement (three writing intensive units in addition to Freshman Composition) has resulted in the development of a writing across the curriculum program. The new Office of College Writing Programs offers faculty workshops on teaching writing, in general, and in an increasing number of disciplines. CUNY-funded Writing Fellows provide faculty support, tutoring, and administrative assistance. Assessment suggests that these measures are improving student writing as well as discipline-specific learning.

The academic review process has been revised and clarified, so that by the end of 2002, virtually all academic departments will have been reviewed over a 6-7 year period, completing a second review cycle. The reviews effectively identify problems, suggest solutions and improvements, and provide a sound basis for planning and resource allocation. Many departments and programs have now achieved accreditation by national professional bodies, providing another level of external evaluation.

Planning for the Future of Queens College

A strong participatory planning process on many levels is in place at the College to guide future development and optimize resource allocation

University Master Plan

The 2000-2004 CUNY Master Plan provides the overall framework for development at Queens College and its provisions promise to benefit the College.

One major goal of the Plan, already taking effect, is to increase the full-time to part-time teaching ratio through strategic hiring. In particular, the creation of a "flagship environment" is intended to foster national prominence for CUNY in particular programs, building on existing strengths. Focused hiring in these selected areas brings cohorts, large enough to achieve synergy, of new faculty to the University. Targeted areas include photonics, teacher education, new media, foreign languages, and biological sciences, and the initiative includes needed space renovation and start-up funds. We have already obtained such cluster hires in several of these areas and anticipate more.

A Technology Fee (\$75 per semester) has been approved by the Board of Trustees beginning September 2002. The proceeds will permit great expansion of educational technology to improve learning throughout the College. Initially, the most pressing needs will be addressed, including expansion of interactive instruction, increased availability of electronic information resources, regular replacement cycles for all campus computers, and additional multimedia classroom. Over time, new instructional initiatives will be funded by the new revenues the fee provides.

College Planning

A Campus Master Plan (Facilities Master Plan) has been produced to guide the future development of the College's physical infrastructure. The Plan projects only minimal need for additional space for most programs, but attempts to make building functions more logical and efficient. Significant upgrading is envisaged to replace aging facilities, particularly in the sciences. Educational goals are articulated in multi-year College academic plans. The most recent plan, for 1997-2002, has run its course; a new planning cycle will begin with the arrival of the new president and will involve the participation of the whole College community, including administrators, faculty, staff, and students, as well as appropriate outside expertise.

A major planning goal is to increase academic standards, while slightly growing enrollments and ensuring continued diversity and educational opportunity for all. This requires that we improve the administrative procedures from admissions through to graduation and that we engage students in their academic work to ensure their success. The new Office of Undergraduate Studies and Retention coordinates administrative structures and academic programs for key populations: freshman and transfer students; at-risk students; and honors students. The Office is also working on a new project to induct new faculty into the intellectual life of the College. This effort builds on our successful Freshman Year Initiative (FYI), which enrolls freshmen in a first-semester academic community (cohorts of 40 enrolled in three courses in common). Plans are to extend the FYI offerings to 95% of the Fall 2002 freshman class. FYI, a participant in the PEW National Learning Communities Project, effectively builds academic communities for both students and faculty at this commuter college.

A new approach to college-wide advising is being developed in the Undergraduate Studies Advising Center, under the direction of a new Director of Advising.

Maintaining Access

The strengthened admissions criteria at Queens College, among the most selective CUNY colleges, are based on an index which includes required SAT or ACT scores and academic performance in high school, particularly in English and math courses. A new University policy of no remediation means that most students must now demonstrate college readiness in reading, writing, and mathematics before enrolling at Queens.

Special programs ensure continued access to college education for all: Prelude to Success enables students who have not passed all the basic skills tests to take skills courses and college level courses at Queens under the auspices of a community college. If they pass skills assessment tests, they can transfer to Queens and receive credit for completed college level coursework. College Now is essentially an outreach program in which

qualified high school students take both credit-bearing courses and skills-building college preparatory courses. The goals are to minimize the need for remediation by improving high school performance and aligning it with CUNY standards and to provide a seamless transition from high school to college and increase success rates at Queens.

Students in the SEEK program (Search for Education, Elevation, and Knowledge) and those classified as English as a Second Language (ESL) are granted additional time to meet skills requirements. SEEK has been restructured and now includes intensive summer programs, a special first-year learning community, and continued follow-up and support throughout students' College careers. In response to changing demographics, the University's definition of ESL students has been adjusted to better meet our students' needs. ESL programs have been expanded, and tutoring by graduate and advanced undergraduate students introduced.

Curriculum Changes: Challenging our Students

Higher expectations for all students have been set by the CUNY Master Plan in the form of the CUNY Proficiency Exam (CPE), which requires that students moving to junior status demonstrate analytic writing, reading, and quantitative reasoning competencies in order to qualify for admission to the upper division.

In keeping with its commitment to the values of a liberal arts education and the needs of students to understand the multi-dimensional worlds they will enter, the College is re-examining its general education requirements to meet our higher academic expectations. In so doing we also intend to provide more guidance to students as they move through their academic careers. Rationales and measurable goals for distributional requirements have been articulated and passed by the Academic Senate, which will facilitate assessment of their effectiveness and viability. New academic fluency and literacy areas are now being developed so the curriculum will provide students with cultural diversity.

To provide opportunities for faculty to improve their teaching, the College is establishing an Office of Teaching and Learning, to open in Fall 2002.

Assessment

Evaluation, measurement, and assessment are required at every level of the University and the College. Administrative effectiveness is assessed by the Chancellor through performance evaluation, linking compensation for senior administrators to the achievement of specified goals. Responsibility for outcomes assessment at the College is vested in the Associate Provost, with the participation of a faculty-majority Outcomes Assessment Committee. Plans are underway for academic departments and programs to assess progress of their respective goals and targets, as specified in their academic plans. Through the Assessment Committee, the College also plans to build consensus on a uniform set of outcomes, primarily summative, to facilitate consistency across programs.

Assessment of students learning is a crucial part of the College's outcomes plan, which includes an annual graduation survey, a summative study in which students evaluate their progress in such areas as critical thinking, writing, and knowledge of particular disciplines. They are asked to assess important college services such as advising and the library. Deficiencies in some areas, such as classroom facilities and student orientation,

have been identified and are being improved. Both the University and the College undertake surveys of students a few years after graduation to assess the effectiveness of job market preparation. Longer-term studies are planned to attempt to probe the effect of a liberal arts education on the lives of students. At the department level, some summative information is provided by the success of our graduates; for example, in gaining admission to professional and graduate schools and in nationally normed tests. Departments also attempt to assess learning outcomes more directly, often in the context of program review. Departments are increasingly encouraged to maintain contact with their alumni to facilitate obtaining longitudinal outcomes data.

Our Academic Future

With administrative guidance and support, the academic departments at Queens College are currently implementing formalized five-year academic plans following program review. The departmental plans, taken as a whole, provide a systematic basis for the College's future growth. Several patterns are clear: Many departments, facing the need to replace large proportions of their faculty who are nearing retirement age, will use this opportunity to strengthen new areas to meet changing needs. Joint hires are being considered, reflecting the increasingly interdisciplinary nature of the academy and student career goals. New interdisciplinary programs include a Bachelor of Business Administration degree and bachelors and masters degrees in bioinformatics.

The College views the pressing shortages of qualified teachers in New York City and State as an obligation and an opportunity. Innovative projects include collaborations with nearby cultural institutions such as Lincoln Center, new middle school programs, and closer coordination with the New York City Board of Education. The latter includes construction of a new elementary and middle school for science and mathematics on campus, currently underway, a Teaching Fellows program with transitional certificates for returning college graduates who wish to teach, and a program to educate MLS-certified librarians for the city's school libraries.

In short, Queens College looks forward to a future of fiscal stability, clear direction, and support from the University and the community, with the continuing strength of a committed administration and faculty, an outstanding student body, and a coherent plan for its future.