



Self-Study

Prepared by

Queens College
of the
City University of New York

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for the
Middle States Commission on Higher Education

Self-Study

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Executive Summary

The Self-Study Process

The preparation of this self-study has engaged the Queens College community since spring 2005, when a Steering Committee was appointed to oversee the process. The committee membership included faculty from across the academic divisions, students from the student government association, and senior administrators. The committee chose the selected topics self-study model, to permit a focus on areas of particular concern to the College and its constituencies, in the expectation that such focus would facilitate the identification of problems and avenues for their improvement. The committee chose to focus on six areas: Transfer Students, recognizing that more than half our students now transfer to us from other institutions; Retention, noting that while many students do graduate in a timely manner, many others do not; Campus Life, in view of the challenge of providing a meaningful social and intellectual life at a commuter school; Affirmative Action, to study the College's response to the diverse community it inhabits and serves; Curriculum and General Education, timely in view of the current restructuring of our general education requirements; and Assessment, to evaluate our effectiveness as a teaching institution.

During the summer of 2005 the self-study design was developed. Each topic was studied by a task force with faculty, staff, and student members, under the guidance of the steering committee. Specific charges and questions were developed for each task force, to ensure alignment of their work, reports, and recommendations with Middle States standards. A draft design was submitted to Middle States in October 2005 and discussed with staff at an on-site visit that included meetings with senior administrators. In November the final self-study design was prepared, reviewed by the steering committee, and submitted to Middle States. Task forces met frequently during Spring 2006, conducting research, interviewing key constituents, discussing findings, and preparing reports and recommendations. In May the reports were submitted to the steering committee. During summer 2006 the committee co-chairs combined the reports into a draft document, which was disseminated to the College community. In September the full steering committee, having reviewed the draft, met to discuss revisions and additions, which were incorporated into a revised version. A series of public forums provided the campus community opportunities for comments, which were also solicited via blogs, email, and paper mail.

In parallel, the visiting team was being formed. The chair of the visiting team was selected in Spring 2006, and during the summer other members of the team were identified. After a preparatory telephone conference in September, the team chair and two generalists on the team visited the College in late October to review the documents that demonstrate compliance with Middle States standards not addressed in the selected topics self-study. They were guided by a revised and updated road map provided by the College, which connects documents with standards. Comments from evaluators about the need for further documentation or clarification in a number of areas were addressed by the self-study team before submission of this final report.

Guided by the community comments and steering committee meetings, the self-study was further revised and presented for further discussion. This process concluded in December, after which

this final self-study document was prepared for submission to the visiting team in February 2007. The site visit will take place in March 2007.

Contents, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The effectiveness of Queens College at fulfilling its distinctive mission and the broader goals of the City University of New York is, by most measures, very good. In the areas most closely studied because they are of greatest immediate concern, the College often ranks above average compared to similar schools within CUNY and the metropolitan New York area. However, while we are seldom less than good, we are not excellent often enough.

Each of the report's chapters takes a statistical and contextual snapshot of the current situation regarding an important issue or issues, including the numerous initiatives undertaken since the last self-study – and particularly since the 2001 interim report – to address concerns noted in the previous evaluation. It then offers an analysis of those quantitative and qualitative data, and concludes with recommendations. Where necessary, it notes which aspects of these challenges are susceptible to local action, and which ones are largely functions of the regional, national, and global socio-economic contexts in which a public institution operates, and are therefore beyond our immediate control.

The faculty and staff of Queens College are committed to make every effort possible toward the highest quality education we can provide to our students. But possibilities are also a function of resources. As employees of an institution where shortage is a longstanding and inescapable reality, in a culture shaken by rapid social and technological changes, we cannot do it alone.

Chapter 1. Facilitating Transfer and Retaining Students

Our student body is composed of two groups: those who enter as freshmen, and those who transfer here at a later stage of their academic career. The rate of success for both groups, measured in terms of continued retention and ultimate graduation, is higher than at many comparable schools within and beyond the City University, and for some populations has increased, but is still far from ideal.

Issues of retention and transfer are inseparable, because the majority of students enter the College as transfers from other institutions, both within CUNY and in the metropolitan area, and must reacclimate to an academic culture that can be daunting. The College operates a broad range of interlocked programs and policies designed to assist students to stay in school and maintain satisfactory progress toward a degree. Academic and personal support programs have been greatly expanded and reorganized over the last five years, a process which is ongoing. Many of these available services, however, are concentrated in the first two years of college life, and transfer students do not benefit from them.

To improve student retention, existing activities of social support and guidance should be made more widespread and systematized. We must work to create the physical and social spaces for a campus culture of welcoming and personal involvement. We must extend and integrate current efforts to gather ongoing data about individual student progress, and establish a coordinated analysis with regular intervention when students show signs of falling behind expectations. It

would be helpful to establish a campus committee on retention to coordinate these processes, to monitor and assess outcomes, and to suggest additional initiatives as circumstances change.

Chapter 2. Campus Life

The combination of physical and social environment that makes up students' experience outside of formal classes is an essential element of their satisfaction with college life, and hence of their retention, educational success, and future loyalty and support. As a commuter school, the College is disadvantaged in trying to provide a rich experience for students who spend relatively little time on campus. Demographic factors reinforce the pressures on our students to limit their time here: they are often older than average, and from modest economic backgrounds, and consequently tend to have heavy obligations of family, children, and employment. Faculty spend more time on campus than students, but for them too the bulk of that time is work-related, not social or recreational.

The College therefore works hard to provide a broad array of spaces, activities, and events that encourage students and faculty to remain on campus and interact informally with both peers and one another. Our first asset is our physical setting; thanks to a beautification program started four years ago, students comment favorably that, unusually for an urban institution, "the campus looks like a college." Athletic facilities, cafés, and dining halls offer gathering places for extra-curricular activities and socializing. Dozens of student clubs operate under the guidance of student government, and their activities as well as exhibitions and performances of student work are publicized in a variety of media.

Nevertheless, student engagement in such activities is low, particularly for those who attend during evenings or weekends. Paradoxically, students complain about a lack of activities while conceding that time constraints would not allow them to partake of more than a small portion of added events; efforts to improve this situation may therefore be of limited effectiveness.

Beyond time pressures, principal factors that discourage students from taking fuller advantage of school life include inadequate maintenance of physical plant, limited food services, and frustrations with campus administrative services and communications. Students may attend events more frequently if we expand the number of popular "free hours" reserved for non-academic activities each week; we also intend to expand the media through which our many activities are publicized on and off campus, particularly in the electronic sector, increasingly central for students. Replacement of the dining contractor provides an opportunity to negotiate increases in the opening hours and variety of campus eating places. The shortage of parking is a critical problem; we must campaign for increased public transit access while also adding more parking. Finally, while we will explore ways to assure more regular cleaning and inspections, eliminating complaints will require restoration of necessary buildings personnel, a budget issue beyond our control. We recommend institutionalizing some mechanism for soliciting ongoing feedback about campus life issues, publicizing concerns, and considering solutions; the lack of available staff to deal in person with student inquiries and procedures, for example, requires sustained attention to training, resource allocation, and technology.

Chapter 3. Affirmative Action

The principle of assuring the widest possible access to "the children of the whole people" has been integral to the mission of CUNY since its founding. That mandate has taken on greater urgency and complexity as the county of Queens has become the most ethnically diverse in New

York, with high proportions of foreign-born and foreign-language residents. Moreover, the internationalized social, economic, and cultural stage on which our nation and its citizens act out their lives is directly reflected in the College's mission "to prepare students to become leading citizens of an increasingly global society." It is therefore a fundamental goal to achieve significant representation of ethnic minorities and women among students, faculty, and staff.

Over the past decade, the College has made efforts in this direction, in part to comply with the 2003 policy of CUNY's Council of Presidents to revitalize affirmative action and diversity programs. There has been some incremental improvement in the percentages of minorities among both students and faculty. However, increasing the campus's attractiveness to minorities requires an academic and social environment where all groups feel appreciated and assisted. Reasons for perceptions that the College is not fully welcoming range from the small size of some minority contingents, who thus lack a sense of community, to the shortage of minority faculty to provide role models. The economic burdens of minorities also play a role; the College has been increasing its course offerings and advising hours at alternative times, to meet the needs of those who work full-time. Other programs to overcome practical obstacles and perceptions by some groups that they are not welcome, which were contemplated after the previous self-study, remain embryonic.

It is recommended that the College step up its various existing efforts. The staffing and resources of the Affirmative Action Office should be enhanced, to enable it to move beyond policy enforcement and become more proactive in seeking out minority applicants, both students and faculty. We should further expand student study opportunities at non-traditional hours, the availability of job counseling and placement, and recruitment in local high schools. A College proposal for a Black Male Initiative program to recruit and support this target population was recently funded by CUNY. To compete for minority faculty, who must be recruited nationwide, the University must make employment more economically attractive, which is dependent on government priorities.

Chapter 4. Curriculum

As the primary agent for fulfilling the College's basic educational mission, the curriculum is subjected to ongoing assessment at the departmental and college level. Further evaluation is carried out by national professional associations in specific disciplines. The faculty, with the students, has responsibility for the curriculum, through the Academic Senate (2/3 faculty, 1/3 students) and its undergraduate and graduate curriculum committees. The broad range of majors offered has recently been expanded by new programs and concentrations. In addition, all undergraduate students are required to master basic college-level skills, and are encouraged to participate in several honors programs with more demanding curricula.

The College is currently fundamentally overhauling its general education requirements. The new system, to be phased in beginning in 2009, responds in part to raised expectations for basic proficiencies and mandated new testing in the 2000-2004 CUNY Master Plan. Some new courses are already being piloted. Modifications, including advanced "Perspectives" courses on disciplinary foundations and controversies, will ensure a meaningful familiarity with the various divisions of knowledge within the liberal arts and sciences, the questions and methods of the various disciplines, and critical thinking. The College also serves community constituencies through exten-

sive curricular divisions for students with special needs and interests; the economically, socially, or physically disadvantaged; and those seeking continuing education for personal development.

Our generally successful and popular programs could be augmented in several ways. Information literacy and writing skills should be further institutionalized within the curriculum -- some steps are already underway in the general education revision -- and more consistently assessed. Further majors should be considered, such as health care, a growing field that attracts students. The Center for Teaching and Learning, founded this year as a focal point for curriculum development and coordination, must be adequately supported. The number of full-time faculty remains low by historical standards, and the percentage of adjunct instruction has risen; additional resources critically needed for restoration of faculty are beyond the purview of the College itself.

Chapter 5. Assessment

Assessment of student learning has been a priority since the 1996 Self-Study Report identified this process as central to the College's educational mission, an awareness reinforced by the 2001 interim report of the Outcomes Assessment Committee established in response to the earlier report. The update noted some progress in fulfilling the 1996 recommendations but added further suggestions; we have since made considerable strides in broadening and deepening faculty awareness of this issue. A culture of systematic assessment has begun to take root, but further efforts are necessary. Significant factors abetting this transition are increased support from CUNY and information technologies that make documentation easier.

At present, assessment of learning focuses on basic knowledge of general and major subject areas and a variety of essential competencies: research, analytical and critical thinking, verbal and written expression. Data regarding outcomes derive from a broad range of proven activities and sources, from alumni surveys to teacher certification exams. Current efforts are concentrated at the level of individual departments, and further evidence comes from College-wide sources, CUNY-wide tests and surveys, and national surveys and professional exams given on our campus. Most departments report that, over the last five years, they have increasingly been making a variety of improvements to their programs based on outcomes measurement, and many have further plans to modify curriculum, standards, or pedagogy over the next five years.

The goal is always to identify areas and strategies for improvement, but the College still needs to allay faculty concerns that increased assessment is aimed primarily at greater accountability rather than better pedagogy. One important way to overcome resistance will be to use assessment methods that are naturally integrated into individual courses. The Outcomes Assessment Committee needs to spearhead and maintain a frank dialogue among administrators, chairs, and faculty regarding goals, progress, and problems.

To complete the work of institutionalizing assessment, the Outcomes Assessment Committee should be enlarged and given a more proactive agenda and necessary resources. It is also important to integrate assessment into the design of the new general education requirements and to provide improved and up-to-date technology to simplify testing and data-gathering. Finally, assessment should be extended to a crucial area of College life, which intersects and reinforces Affirmative Action efforts: to evaluate how well we are succeeding in educating our students about a major goal of our global mission, the promotion of tolerance and the celebration of diversity.

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1 Facilitating Transfer and Retaining Students

Standard 7: Institutional Assessment

Standard 8: Student Admissions and Retention

Standard 9: Student Support Services

1.1 Introduction

The reputation of Queens College has risen as students find it more difficult to get in; however, for many of those who do arrive, it is also difficult to stay in. We have nominally four-year undergraduate programs, but in reality most of our students do not complete a program of study in four years. Many take another year or two, and others never complete their degree at all. Similarly, a 30-credit master's program, which on a full-time basis could be completed in less than two years, often takes our graduate students, who are largely part-time, four years or more. Retention is inseparable from graduation: those who don't stay, don't graduate.

While we develop retention programs to target incoming freshmen, more than half our incoming students are transfers who have taken at least a portion of their academic program at other colleges. It is much more difficult to target retention programs to transfer students, who bring a wide range of academic backgrounds to the table. In addition, it is harder to provide transfers with the full academic experience we believe they need. Transfer students may experience particular acclimation problems. They may also lose credits; despite our best efforts, the transfer process is not seamless or lossless, even for transfers within CUNY.

There are various measures of this attrition; a common benchmark, following a cohort of students matriculated as freshman over time, reveals that after six years 55% have either graduated or are still enrolled, while about 45% have left without graduating. Since our last self-study we have for the most part increased our retention and graduation rates over five- and seven-year periods. The numbers rank us above average among CUNY senior colleges and among similar urban public institutions. However, it remains true that almost half our students never earn the degree for which they presumably came to us. Although students who leave before graduating may well feel that their time at Queens, however truncated, was positive for them, we believe we can and should do better.

The following sections present and analyze the current situation and trends, consider the variety of factors that may cause students to withdraw before graduation, and outline existing programs and policies designed to contribute to their staying. Among those factors that may cause students to withdraw, the largest, stemming from broad socioeconomic realities of our target population, is beyond the College's direct control. Being often older than traditional students, and/or coming from lower economic groups and/or immigrant backgrounds, many students have job and family obligations that permit them to study only part-time. This is particularly true of male students – our female students appear to come from a broader socio-economic background. Due in part to these constraints, many of our students are part-time: there over 17,000 students currently enrolled, but we serve just under 13,000 full-time equivalents (FTE's). Many students rely on financial aid programs administered by the state and federal governments, whose shifting resources and requirements are imposed from elsewhere. Not atypically, these external

difficulties increase to the point where they require a student to withdraw, temporarily or permanently. Other concerns can, however, be addressed by campus action. The quality of campus life is an extracurricular reality that can weigh heavily in students' desire to remain actively involved with the institution (see Chapter 2, Campus Life). Successful current policies and practices encompass a coordinated set of programs aimed at improving retention, plus recent changes in admissions requirements for all senior colleges within CUNY.

The chapter concludes with recommendations for additional programmatic efforts to improve retention and graduation rates and for a more consistent and institutionalized system of ongoing analysis in this area.

1.2 Current Trends and Programs

The College's level of achievement in retaining entering students and assisting their successful completion of a degree program is, in broad terms, good but with room for continued improvement. This section examines retention patterns and graduation rates for our students, and briefly summarizes the numerous existing programs for encouraging students to continue their academic career. One advantageous outcome of recent campus discussion of this issue was to deepen our comprehension of the challenges we face and to widen the sense of urgency and awareness of specific problems.

Data are presented separately for incoming freshmen and for transfer students, for two reasons. Transfer students constitute the majority of our students (in Fall 2005, 55% of students enrolling for the first time were transfers), and the coordinated curricular programming of the successful First Year Initiative (FYI), a program available to the majority of entering freshmen, is not available for transfer students; as mentioned above, it is difficult to design appropriate coordinated programs for transfer students, who enter Queens with a wide range of academic backgrounds.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

Retention Task Force Report, 2006

1.2.1 Overview and Statistics

1. Retention

Our retention and graduation rates have shown significant improvement in the last ten years. Looking first at first-time freshmen, Table 1 below presents figures from CUNY's Office of Institutional Research on full-time freshmen admitted in the fall from 1995 to 2004. (Parenthetically, the dip in enrollment during the late 1990's, discussed in our 2002 Periodic Review Report, is very apparent.) Over that time span, the percentage of students who return for their second year has risen from 78% to 84%, with minor variations in the generally upward pattern. Of the 1444 admitted in fall 1995, six years after matriculation, in 2001, 7% were still enrolled and 40% had graduated from Queens College, so that 47% had either completed their degree or were still making progress towards it. (These figures include a few who graduated with an associate degree from a CUNY two-year college.) Of the 876 full-time freshmen admitted in fall 1999, 83% were still enrolled a year later, and six years later 7% were still enrolled and 51% had graduated, so 58% had completed or were continuing – an improvement of

over 10%. Similar gains are apparent in four-year rates. A total of 53% of the 1995 cohort had completed or were continuing in 1998, while 67% of the 2002 cohort were in 2005. Thus the College appears to have made substantial progress in improving the retention and progress to degree of its students.

Table 1: Retention and Graduation Rates, 1995-2004, Full-Time Freshmen

	Year of Entry	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
	Total Cohort	1444	1041	1153	1134	876	1085	1204	1178	1290	1352
Yr.	Outcome										
1	Still Enrolled	77.5	78.2	81.7	83.3	82.6	83.9	84.1	84.6	81.0	83.8
2	Still Enrolled	60.9	65.8	66.8	69.5	67.7	69.2	71.9	71.1	69.2	
	Earned Degree	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.2	
3	Still Enrolled	52.3	59.4	58.8	62.2	59.4	60.8	65.7	63.2		
	Earned Degree	1.0	0.9	0.7	1.6	1.9	1.8	1.2	3.6		
4	Still Enrolled	33.7	34.6	34.5	40.2	38.5	37.0	35.6			
	Earned Degree	15.5	21.3	19.3	20.8	22.8	23.4	27.0			
5	Still Enrolled	14.8	12.7	14.2	14.2	12.7	12.5				
	Earned Degree	32.8	41.4	39.6	44.7	44.2	45.2				
6	Still Enrolled	6.8	5.9	7.4	6.6	7.0					
	Earned Degree	39.8	47.9	46.5	51.1	50.5					
8	Still Enrolled	3.0	2.3	2.6							
	Earned Degree	39.8	47.9	46.5							
10	Still Enrolled	1.3									
	Earned Degree	45.4									

We have made similar, if slightly less dramatic, improvements in the retention of students who first matriculate as full-time transfers, as illustrated in Table 2. The first-year return rate has changed little between 1995 and now. However, this percentage had risen to about 78% in the entering classes from 1996-2001 and has fallen slightly in subsequent years; were this trend to continue further, it would present cause for concern. From 1995 to 2000, the last cohort for which such data are available, the number of transfer students who are either still enrolled or have earned a degree within five years has increased from 63% (4.8 + 58.4) to 69% (2.8 + 65.9). This is encouraging. However, it does appear that the trend in the last few years is less favorable – while in 1999 70% (53.0 + 16.8) of transfer students were still enrolled or had graduated, by 2003 this proportion was only 65%. Here again, while the fluctuations are not large, they may indicate a trend for which, if it remains ongoing, some explanation should be sought.

Table 2: Retention and Graduation Rates, 1995-2004, Transfer Students

	Year of Entry	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
	Total Cohort	854	889	808	834	773	789	854	1101	1074	1146
Yr.	Outcome										
1	Still Enrolled	75.4	78.4	77.4	78.3	78.4	78.7	78.9	75.4	75.0	73.0
2	Still Enrolled	52.1	51.4	50.6	49.4	53.0	53.0	51.8	51.8	49.2	
	Earned Degree	15.1	18.2	15.3	17.6	16.8	20.3	17.6	15.5	17.1	
3	Still Enrolled	23.1	22.0	19.2	25.1	22.8	21.9	22.5	24.1		

	Earned Degree	39.5	43.5	42.3	40.6	43.2	49.0	44.3	39.2		
4	Still Enrolled	10.8	9.6	8.7	9.1	7.5	7.7	8.5			
	Earned Degree	53.0	55.2	52.2	55.5	57.8	62.0	57.0			
5	Still Enrolled	4.8	4.3	4.8	6.0	3.2	2.8				
	Earned Degree	58.4	60.5	56.7	60.1	61.4	65.9				
6	Still Enrolled	2.7	3.3	3.0	3.5	2.2					
	Earned Degree	61.0	62.3	59.7	62.6	62.5					
8	Still Enrolled	1.6	1.8	1.1							
	Earned Degree	61	62.3	59.7							
10	Still Enrolled	0.6									
	Earned Degree	63.9									

2. Graduation Rates

Graduation rates among the College's various constituencies have remained stable or improved since 1995. The rate for full-time freshmen has risen steadily over the last five years for which data are available. From 2001 to 2005 the percent of entering students who graduate within 6 years rose from 40% to 51% (cohorts entering 1995-1999), those graduating within four years more dramatically, from 16% to 27% (cohorts from 1995-99 to 2001-05) (see Table 2). It is not surprising that transfer students, who enter with prior college credits, complete their degrees more quickly than entering freshmen: 57% do so after four years. What does call for explanation is that transfer students also demonstrate higher overall success rates: the percentage of those graduating within 6 years remained essentially stable throughout the 5 years prior to 2005, when it was 63%. The four-year graduation rate for transfers was somewhat more fluid, but over the data period has not varied far from the 2005 level of 57%.

An important factor that has contributed to the increasing success rates among freshmen matriculants is the 1998 vote of the CUNY Board of Trustees to raise entrance requirements, and the resultant elimination of remedial, developmental, and compensatory courses at Queens and the other senior colleges. These changes did not affect transfers, who normally had already been completing any remediation before arrival on our campus. In 2002, a CUNY report to the New York State Education Department on the effects of tightened remediation estimated that new standards improved the senior colleges' overall retention rate by a modest amount (4%). Between 1999 and 2000, when the changes took effect, Queens College itself showed a similar improvement in another indicator of problems that may lead to dropping out: the percentage of courses that students fail or never complete decreased by 4%.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

Retention Task Force Report, Table 7

There are significant differences among different groups of transfer students. Those who come to us from some schools are much more likely to graduate, that is, to achieve academic success, than those who come to us from some other schools. Table 3 shows the 6-year graduation rate for the students who transferred to us in the academic year 1999-2000 from the larger of our feeder schools. (Students come to us from over 200 colleges; only those from whom larger numbers reach us are shown.) There are clearly pronounced differences among students from different schools. For example, 77% of students from Queensborough Community College

graduated within six years, while only 66% of those from Laguardia Community College did. This observation suggests that it may be helpful to target at least some of our advising and interventions to students from particular schools, who are evidently more at risk of failure.

Table 3: Six-year Academic Success of Transfer Students Admitted in 1999-2000

Feeder School	# Stdnt	# Grads	Grad. Rt %	Accpt. Crdt	Tot Earn Crdt	Non Xfer Crdt	Degree GPA
Boro of Manhattan Com.	63	47	75	51	130	78	2.90
John Jay C. Crim. Just.	29	19	66	26	130	104	3.19
Laguardia Community	175	116	66	57	136	79	2.95
Queensborough Co.	374	289	77	51	130	79	3.00
Tot CUNY 2-yr + comp.	760	540	71	40	129	90	2.90
Total - CUNY Senior	170	131	77	25	136	111	3.07
Total - out of state	27	22	81	22	125	103	3.11
Foreign-Adv Stand	166	115	69	39	141	102	3.40
Foreign-No Adv	43	40	93	7	124	117	3.64
Non Accredited College	186	156	84	15	125	110	3.43
Total - foreign	395	311	79	20	130	110	3.49
Total - local privates	220	147	67	24	127	103	3.17
Nassau Community	240	168	70	46	131	85	3.00
Suffolk County Com.	26	17	65	41	128	87	3.01
Suny Stony Brook	48	40	83	26	130	104	3.13
Total - SUNY	416	298	72	28	130	102	3.15

1.2.2 Comparisons with Similar Schools

The College’s retention and graduation patterns are among the highest in CUNY and compare favorably with many similar institutions, including private schools with high tuitions. Overall, our performance is somewhat above the local average. It should be noted that comparison with private colleges is inherently limited by their advantages in resources and tuition levels.

A range of comparable institutions were selected from other CUNY colleges and local area private schools that draw on the same population. For these schools, Table 4 presents retention and graduation data prepared by the Education Trust. (We did not use the Trust’s list of schools comparable to us, as it did not seem realistic.) For CUNY schools, the Trust data are “system retention” and include students who start at one CUNY school but graduate from a different one. (Numbers for Queens differ slightly from those in Tables 1 and 2, which disaggregate some numbers combined here.) Note that these statistics cover students admitted in fall 1997, the most recent cohort for which the Trust has published 6-year graduation rates. This precedes the phase-in of CUNY’s admission and remediation policies beginning in 1998, and the development of our extensive advising system. Our present graduation rates are higher, as discussed above.

Our 6-year graduation rate of 49% ranks just below the median of 50%. While we graduate fewer students than New York University, the wealthiest and more selective private institution surveyed, we are not far behind SUNY Stony Brook, a well-funded state school, and are well ahead of such local competitors as Long Island University.

Table 4: Graduation Rates (6 Year) of Selected Local Schools – Fall 1997 Cohort

School	Funding/ FTE	Size (undergrad)	% Pell	% Under- rep'd. min.	Grad. rate
New York U.	\$30,526	18,314	18%	18%	77%
St. John's U.	\$11,223	12,863	34%	30%	64%
Hofstra University	\$13,418	8,708	24%	17%	56%
Pace U. NYC	\$15,129	7,552	36%	21%	56%
SUNY Stony Brook	\$12,836	13,164	41%	18%	56%
Adelphi U.	\$13,732	3,671	26%	22%	53%
CUNY Baruch	\$6,382	10,149	52%	30%	52%
CUNY Queens	\$8,441	9,561	40%	24%	49%
NYIT Old Westbury	\$16,644	2,577	31%	16%	41%
LIU C. W. Post	\$14,678	4,723	40%	8%	40%
CUNY Brooklyn	\$8,905	8,786	53%	37%	39%
CUNY Hunter	\$7,355	12,295	48%	37%	39%
CUNY City	\$13,413	6,919	58%	58%	33%
CUNY York	\$8,538	4,168	66%	74%	29%
LIU—Brooklyn	\$15,184	4,725	85%	59%	21%

Nominally Queens College does not award doctoral degrees, and for this reason it is classified as a master's institution. However, because (as mentioned above) we participate extensively in the CUNY Ph.D. programs, and indeed many doctoral programs are based on the campus, we are actually in some sense a doctoral institution. We therefore also wish to compare ourselves to some urban public doctoral institutions. As seen in Table 5, we achieve a 6-year graduation rate among the best in this group, despite a relatively high rate of students receiving Pell grants (often an indication of student income) and a relatively low funding level – and this in one of the highest cost-of-living urban areas in the nation. We believe this is a tribute to the dedication of our faculty and staff.

Table 5: IPEDS: SAT, Funding, and Graduation Rates (6 Year) – Selected National Schools

Institution	SAT	Carnegie Classif.	Funding / FTE	Size (ungr)	Pct. Pell	Grad. Rate
Rutgers University- Newark	1,070	Doct./Res. Int. (DRI)	N/A	5,657	38%	51%
CUNY Queens College	1,030	Masters I	\$8,441	9,561	40%	49%
University of Cincinnati	1,045	Doct./Res. Ext. (DRE)	\$12,376	16,870	24%	48%
U. Illinois Chicago	1,045	DRE	\$16,855	14,855	32%	45%
San Diego State U.	1,060	DRI	\$7,671	23,200	32%	44%
Cal. State U-Long Beach	1,020	Masters I	\$6,868	23,968	33%	42%
U. Houston-U. Park	1,055	DRE	\$7,409	21,757	29%	40%
U. Colorado Denver	1,045	DRI	\$8,324	6,248	16%	39%
San Francisco State U.	990	Masters I	\$7,071	18,817	33%	38%
U. Massachusetts-Boston	980	DRI	\$11,416	7,065	26%	34%
Cal. State U.-Los Angeles	860	Masters I	\$8,248	11,975	52%	33%
Portland State University	1,010	DRI	\$7,678	12,562	28%	33%

Institution	SAT	Carnegie Classif.	Funding / FTE	Size (ungr)	Pct. Pell	Grad. Rate
Cal. State U Doming.Hills	825	Masters I	\$8,276	6,148	57%	31%
Cleveland State U.	885	DRI	\$9,313	7,972	37%	27%
Indiana U. -Purdue U.- Indianapolis	985	DRI	\$16,037	16,043	27%	22%

Within CUNY, Queens is more successful at retaining and graduating students who enter as full-time freshmen than any of the other senior colleges except Baruch College, which as a specialized and selective business school is not directly comparable to us. For the most recent 6-year period (1999-2005), Queens had a graduation rate of 51%, trailing only Baruch (59%). We are far ahead of the other schools, which ranged downward to 30%. The same is true for transfer students: Queens College's 4- and 6-year graduation rates average 15-20% above the median for all senior colleges, and for four-year graduation our figures are almost identical to Baruch's.

The data below, from the CUNY Office of Institutional Research, indicate whether students who started at a specific CUNY college were retained by that college. The column labeled "retention" is the sum of those who graduated plus those who are still at the college. These institution retention rates tend to be slightly lower than the system retention rates reported in Table 4, due to internal transfers. Data are for students admitted in the fall of 1998 and the fall of 1999. It is evident that we are again more successful at retaining and graduating students than other CUNY colleges except Baruch.

Table 6: Freshmen Retention and Graduation Rates (6 Year): CUNY Senior Colleges

Admit Date (Fall)	1998		1999	
	Graduation	Retention	Graduation	Retention
Baruch	53.1	59.3	58.7	62.8
Queens	51.1	57.7	50.5	57.5
Brooklyn	43.7	49.7	39.4	46.7
Hunter	31.9	40.3	36.7	44
City College	30.9	40	34.8	41.5
York	28.3	35.1	29.9	36.5

Evaluating transfer student retention and graduation rates is more difficult. Local private colleges do not publicly disseminate transfer retention data, so the only institutions against which Queens can be compared are within CUNY. The table below compares 4-year graduation and retention rates by institution, for students who transfer to a CUNY senior college. Queens College is more successful in retaining and graduating transfer students than any other CUNY college except Baruch.

Table 7: Transfer Retention and Graduation Rates (4 Year): CUNY Senior Colleges

Admit Date (Fall)	2000		2001	
	Graduation	Retention	Graduation	Retention
Baruch	62	71.5	69	76
Queens	62	69.7	57	65.5

Brooklyn	41.8	54.3	43.3	55.5
Hunter	42.4	53.3	39.5	51.1
City	37.2	54.9	37.9	53.3
York	39.9	50.4	37.2	51.3

Although they graduate at higher rates than “native” students, transfer students do not achieve similar academic performance, as shown in the following table. (More recent data are currently not available for all schools listed.)

Table 8: GPA’s of Transfers and Freshman Entrants

School	Associate Degree Transfers from CUNY		Senior College “Natives” with Junior Class Standing	
	Fall 1999 GPA	# of Students	Fall 1999 GPA	# of Students
Baruch	2.38	697	2.77	687
Brooklyn	2.39	257	2.78	682
City	2.34	233	2.68	576
Hunter	2.51	290	2.76	938
John Jay	2.50	162	2.64	362
Lehman	2.55	313	2.73	424
Medgar Evers	2.72	76	2.35	12
NYC Tech	2.81	280	2.42	4
Queens	2.51	323	2.80	996
Staten Island	2.97	126	3.20	87
York	2.56	170	2.68	367
Total Senior	2.51	2,927	2.75	5,135

On the other hand, there appears to be little correlation between the academic performance of transfer students and the number of credits they bring in, as shown in the following table, except at the highest transfer levels, at which it probably represents student uncertainty about their academic programs. Students who transfer no credits to the College have slightly lower average grades; this may be because they take more introductory courses outside their majors and these have lower grades, on average, than advanced courses in the major. (Grades on transfer courses are not computed in the GPA.)

Table 9: Mean GPA for 2003-2004 Graduates with Transfer Credits

Credits Transferred	None	1-15	16-30	31-45	46-60	61-75	76-84
N	694	92	179	163	242	609	13
Mean GPA	3.07	3.18	3.25	3.09	3.09	3.11	2.72

There are significant differences in academic behavior between first-time freshmen and transfer student populations, as shown in the following table. Freshmen are far more likely to be full-time students than transfer students are, to about the same extent for women and men. While ethnic distributions are similar for full-time freshmen and transfers, there are significantly more

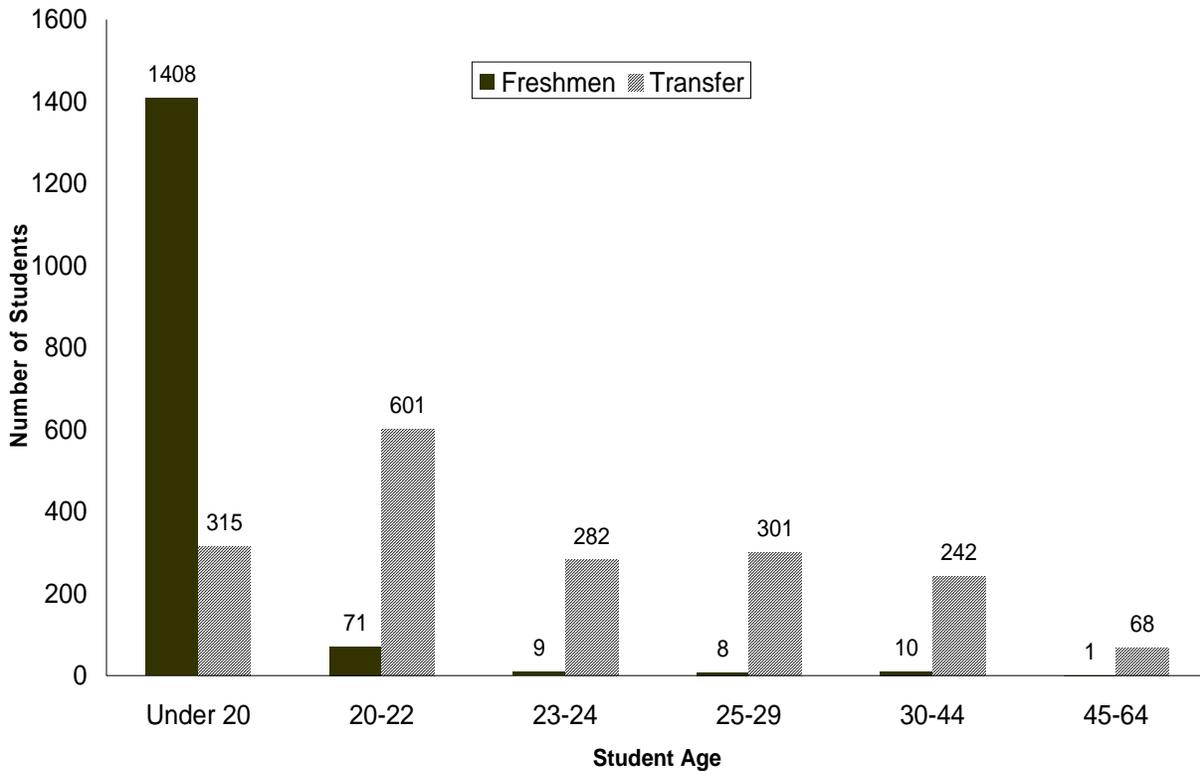
African-American and Hispanic part-time transfers. Only 25% of white transfer students are part-time, while 42% of blacks, and 36% of Hispanics, are. These differences might reflect income disparities.

Table 10: New Students at Queens College Fall 2005: Full-time/Part-time vs. Admission Type, Gender, Age, and Ethnicity

	Freshmen			Transfers		
	Full time	Part time	% Part tim	Full time	Part time	% Part time
Gender						
Women	884	23	2.5%	774	328	29.8%
Men	586	16	2.7%	531	209	28.2%
Total	1509	39	2.5%	1275	537	29.7%
Age						
Under 20	1387	21	1.5%	305	10	3.2%
20-22	65	6	8.5%	500	101	16.8%
23-24	8	1	11.1%	198	84	29.8%
25-29	4	4	50%	165	136	45.2%
30-44	4	6	60%	92	150	38.0%
45-64	0	1	100%	14	54	79.4%
Total	1468	39	2.6%	1274	535	29.6%
Ethnicity						
White	735	20	2.6%	674	227	25.2%
Black	110	5	4.3%	109	79	42.0%
Hispanic	265	6	2.2%	211	120	36.3%
Asian/Pacif. Isl.	359	8	2.2%	278	111	28.5%
Total	1469	39	2.6%	1272	537	29.7%

As expected, the age distribution of native students differs from that of transfer students – the former are younger. What is less expected is that, as shown in Table 10 and in the figure below, there is a distribution of adult transfer students extending well past age 30. This reflects the complexity of our student demographics.

Freshmen vs Transfer (Admitted Fall 2005: Full Time + Part Time)



Another useful measure of retention success is the fraction of students who return after the first year. This is shown in the table below. It is evident that among New York area schools, the percentage of full-time first-time students who return to Queens after their first year (81% for students entering in Fall 2003) compares favorably to other local institutions, and is only 6 points behind the statistical leader (SUNY-Stony Brook, the area’s most prestigious branch of the State University).

Table 11: First-year Retention – Freshmen Entering Fall 2003

School	Return rate for Fall 2004
SUNY Stony Brook	87%
Queens College	81%
Adelphi University	80%
Hofstra University	74%
LIU—C. W. Post	70%

In summary, the data show that Queens College’s retention and graduation rates compare favorably to those of other CUNY colleges and many of our local private competitors. Since the college has significantly expanded its retention efforts since the period during which these freshmen entered the college, it is possible that our current retention levels are higher.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

1.2.3 Existing Programs

The College strives to provide the support services that are reasonably necessary to enable students to achieve their goals, and our goals for them. Retention-related initiatives are currently threaded throughout the institution; a wide variety of programs, policies, and activities are specifically designed to make students feel welcome, attended to, and assisted with problems, all of which attitudes tend to increase retention. Existing programs may be summarized under three areas: Academic Departments, Academic Advising and Support, and Student Affairs (on the latter, see also Chapter 2, Campus Life).

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

Retention Task Force Report, Table 8, Chair Interviews
Sub-Committee Report

1. Academics: Departments, Curricula, Community

Numerous activities are undertaken at the departmental level to promote retention and graduation. Academic programs and faculty work to foster an overall sense of community by organizing an imaginative array of activities and procedures. Their goals are to ensure that students are informed about requirements and activities, to provide ongoing advisement, to encourage student involvement with the major, and to monitor progress and provide tutoring or other assistance as appropriate. Various departments aim to create a welcoming and collegial atmosphere through a range of departmental events, both social and academic, from student-faculty parties to clubs, field trips, speakers, and conferences and exhibitions that include student participation. Many provide physical spaces where majors can meet; they encourage progress further by attempting to staff all courses required for the major, and by providing group recognition and individual support on present requirements and future applications. Some activities, notably systematic advising, are nearly universal; others are specific to relevant departments. Some full-time faculty make themselves available to meet and/or communicate with students outside office hours, a service which cannot be required of adjunct faculty.

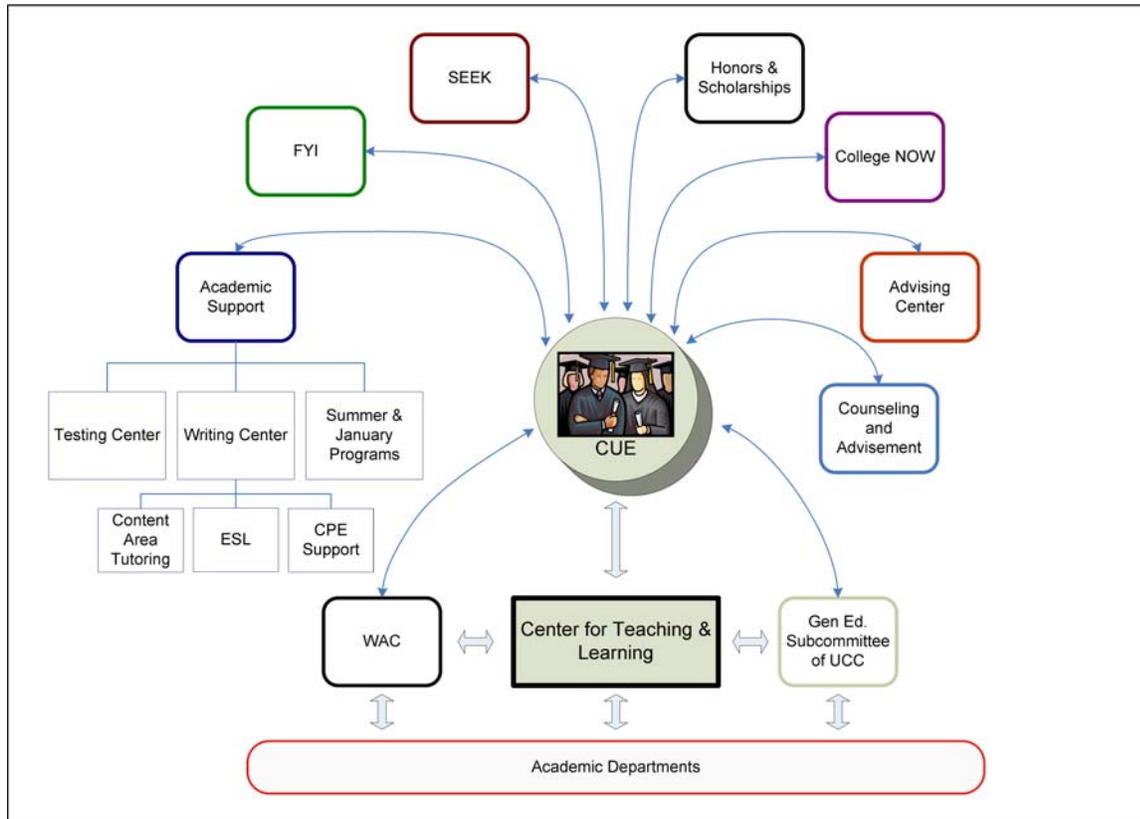
SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

Retention Task Force Report, Table 8:
Department/Program Chair Interview, Quantitative Summary,
Retention Task Force Report, Table 9:
Department Chair Interview, Summary of Qualitative Data

2. Academic Advising and Support: Coordinated Undergraduate Education

In the last ten years the College has greatly expanded the advising and support services it provides to students. These programs are connected and funded through the University's Coordinated Undergraduate Education (CUE) initiative, which brings together all areas of the college that impact on students' undergraduate experience. The following overview suggests the range of activities; for further details on each component, see the Retention Task Force report. Some efforts to improve student engagement and hence retention intersect with the structure of the curriculum, or are administered by curricular subdivisions of the College; for more detail on these elements, see Chapter 4, Curriculum and General Education; the new Center

for Teaching and Learning and the Writing across the Curriculum program are both described there. The work of CUE may be summarized in the following figure.



CUE at Queens College: Cultivating Excellence in Undergraduate Education

The individual programs which participate in CUE are described below.

Advising Center

The Advising Center has greatly expanded its number of staff, students served, and initiatives undertaken. The Center provides academic advising services to all undergraduate students, and is the portal through which all freshmen and most transfer students enter the College. Many activities and services are provided to ease new students' transition, from a new-student phone line to collaborative advising and registration programs. All entering freshmen attend a workshop on College requirements and programs; new transfers are offered similar workshop options and in spring 2006 73% used them. Students who have left but are re-entering are assisted in re-acclimating to the College and to academic life. The Center reviews the transcript of students with 75 or more credits, informing them of the status of their General Education Requirements and of any problems on their records.

Academic Support

Provides academic support services including writing programs and laboratory, content tutoring in specific courses and subjects, ESL, and study skills workshops. Provides summer and January immersion programs to support students in meeting basic skills requirements.

Continuing Student Services

This office has recently improved its availability for non-traditional students in terms of hours and communications media. Operates English 110 (to ensure completion of this important requirement), the Unevaluated Transfer Credit intervention, and an Undeclared Major intervention for undecided students.

Freshman Year Initiative (FYI)

A program of learning communities designed to enhance the first-year experience. Each community is made up of approximately 40 students, four professors, and mentors and teaching assistants; students take three courses together during their first semester. FYI communities were available to some 800 of the 1300 freshmen entering the College in Fall 2005.

Sophomore Initiative Program

This program focuses on the transition from freshman work to the completion of general education requirements. Sophomore Milestones Workshops are designed to introduce these goals and concepts to second-year students.

Honors Programs

The Office of Honors and Scholarships advises and mentors students in the College's various honors programs. Freshman Honors provides a liberal-arts curriculum of interrelated classes that emphasize critical thinking, writing and presentation. Upon completing Freshman Honors, students may enter one of the divisional honors programs in Humanities, Mathematical and Natural Sciences, and Social Sciences. Each year, the CUNY Honors College accepts a select group of outstanding freshmen into the challenging University Scholars program, where they participate in interdisciplinary seminars using the resources of New York City. Students receive free tuition, expenses, and computer, as well as special advising and registration priority. Queens College honors students have been highly successful in national competitions, including Marshall, Fulbright, Truman, and Goldwater Scholarships.

Health Professions Advisory Services

The Committee on Health Professions consists of faculty and administrators who provide information and advising to students interested in these careers.

DegreeWorks

The College is implementing DegreeWorks, an on-line advisement system that provides students and their advisors with degree information, including the requirements for their major, what-if scenarios for alternate programs, and listings of courses and requirements still to be met, as well as transcript information. These detailed records will enable advisors to assist students in making progress toward their degrees.

Centralized Information Services

The College provides campus-wide information through pamphlets, leaflets, and internally-authored publications for use by students, faculty, and staff (How to Choose a Major, Guide to Academic Policies and Procedures, Freshman Handbook, etc.).

Labor Education Advancement Project (LEAP)

Offers working students over 25 the opportunity to enroll in a special sequence of courses that meet the College's general education requirements and establish a strong learning community based on counseling and on course content that draws on students' life and work experience.

Office of Converging Technologies (OCT)

The College's information technology agency operates and supports numerous electronic communications forums that help students communicate with each other, with faculty, and with staff and to garner information needed for their progress: student e-mail accounts, computer labs,

registration kiosks, wireless availability, College and departmental websites, and Blackboard accounts for courses.

Search for Education, Elevation, and Knowledge (SEEK)

SEEK, an opportunity program, enables academically motivated students who are economically disadvantaged to attend college and provides them with a supportive learning community with supplemental instructors, additional tutoring, and an environment of students from similar backgrounds.

Weekend College

The Weekend College program enables students to earn a bachelor's degree in some disciplines by taking classes on Friday evenings, Saturdays and Sundays, and degrees in any College major by a combination of evening and weekday classes.

Adult Collegiate Education Program (ACE)

The ACE program offers students over age 25 a structured opportunity to complete a bachelor's degree. Scheduling, counseling services, and pace are tuned to adult needs and commitments

3. Student Affairs

Programs provided by the College's Student Affairs department to bolster students' academic performance through opportunities for personal growth and development include:

Student Life Office

Creates activities for students to develop life skills, explore new ideas, test their values, and assume responsibility in an environment both challenging and supportive. Programs are social, educational, and recreational, and include leadership development and small group or individual advisement. Advises the Student Association (student government) and its affiliates, including 150 registered student organizations and 80 active groups.

Office of Special Services

Provides services for students with disabilities, including interpreters, increased time for tests, note-takers, tutors, and compensatory technology.

Substance Abuse Counseling

Offers treatment and intervention, both direct counseling and referral to community agencies; hours of service were recently extended.

Child Development Center

An on-campus daycare center that provides affordable subsidized early care and education to children of QC students; services approximately 140 student parents each year.

Athletics Department

Advises and pre-registers all College athletes. Sends evaluation letters to instructors of athletes, and coaches and administrators meet with athletes who are struggling. The graduation and retention rate of athletes was 88% last year, considerably higher than the College average.

Health Service Center

Provides health services to students and staff on campus, and assists students with obtaining health benefits and insurance. Assisted approximately 6400 students in calendar 2005.

Financial Aid Office

Provides information on the financial aid process and programs, and assists students in obtaining appropriate aid.

International Students and Scholars Office

Provides services to international students and their dependents, as mandated by federal regulations. Advises on issues regarding their academic program and monitors their maintenance of good grades and full-time status.

Office of Career Development and Internships

Extends learning beyond the “walls” of QC, fostering career consciousness and career development through counseling, internships, workshops, and placement services.

Counseling and Advisement Center

Professional staff attempt to enhance students’ connectedness to themselves, Queens College, and the world through personal, psychological, and/or academic counseling, and conduct outreach and counseling for students on academic Early Warning and Probation. Collaborates with the Undergraduate Scholastic Standards Committee to identify students who are at risk academically, emotionally, or psychologically.

Peer Advisement Program

An academic credit-bearing program of service and learning through a practicum experience; student peer advisors are supervised and taught to counsel individual students about college adjustment, educational requirements, and other problems, and make appropriate referrals. Serves approximately 2500 students each year.

Minority Student Affairs and Pre-Professional Advisement

Works with academic, administrative, and support units to ensure effective outreach toward, and sensitivity to, the needs of minority students; provides academic and social support to minority students interested in pre-professional and professional courses of study.

1.3 Factors That Influence Retention

As noted, some of the more pervasive and compelling reasons for leaving school can only be addressed by the larger society that sets our social and economic context. It is possible, however, to identify some factors over which the College may exert a measure of control, through changes in policy or added research and initiatives. Some concern the identity and background of individual students, others the quality of the experience that all admitted students have once they arrive on campus.

1.3.1 Variables among Individual Students

The “flip side” of the distinctive and lively diversity of our home borough and city is that the mosaic is too varied to discern overall patterns. Our students are highly individualized, with combinations of backgrounds, resources, and pressures that reveal few consistent correlations between academic failure or withdrawal and demographic and personal factors such as age, ethnicity, income level, and field of study. Three personal factors that may influence student retention are worth noting, though further research is needed.

1. Gender

Gender is the one readily identifiable and clear factor in retention rates and academic achievement: a substantial majority of the students awarded the bachelor’s degree after 6 years are female. Of the full-time freshmen who earned the degree by 2005 (students who entered in 1999, Table 12), 64% were women; figures were very similar for transfer students, at 63% after 6 years (Table 13). Rates fluctuate slightly, but women remain consistently ahead of men at every step. And it is troubling that among first-time freshmen who remain enrolled after 6 years, the percentage who are male fell almost 20 points from 1996 to 1999, to a low of 29% (though

this is partially offset by a increase of 6% in the percent of men who have earned a degree by that time). Among transfer students the male-female ratio remains more nearly constant, and in some categories women and men are nearly equal, though women still have an overall advantage.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

Retention Task Force Report, Tables 8, 9

Table 12: Six-year-later Status by Gender for Full-time Freshman Cohorts Entering Fall 1996 to Fall 1999.

Year 6 Status	Year	1996	1997	1998	1999
Still Enrolled	Total in group	76	83	83	68
	Number of Men	37	34	38	20
	Number of Women	39	49	45	48
	Women as % of group	51%	59%	54%	71%
Awarded Degree	Total in group	492	524	495	417
	Number of Men	146	188	159	149
	Number of Women	346	336	336	268
	Women as % of group	70%	64%	68%	64%
Other	Total in group	372	375	304	286
	Number of Men	200	192	147	141
	Number of Women	172	183	157	145
	Women as % of group	46%	49%	52%	51%

Table 13: Six-year-later Status by Gender for Full-time Transfer Cohorts Entering Fall 1996 to Fall 1999.

Year 6 Status	Gender	1996	1997	1998	1999
Still Enrolled	Total in group	37	34	34	21
	Number of Men	19	13	14	10
	Number of Women	18	21	20	11
	Women as % of group	49%	62%	59%	52%
Awarded Degree	Total in group	565	500	531	492
	Number of Men	199	178	159	185
	Number of Women	366	322	373	307
	Women as % of group	65%	64%	70%	63%
Other	Total in group	274	263	260	249
	Number of Men	119	127	123	111
	Number of Women	155	136	137	138
	Women as % of group	57%	52%	53%	55%

A study conducted by the Freshman Year Initiative (FYI) on its students demonstrated that gender differences appear not only in retention, but in academic performance, at both the one-year and five-year benchmarks. The following graph of men and women according to their

GPA's at the end of their first year reveals that the distribution of their GPA's is considerably different, with women averaging higher than men.

Table 14: GPA's of Female and Male Students after the Freshman Year

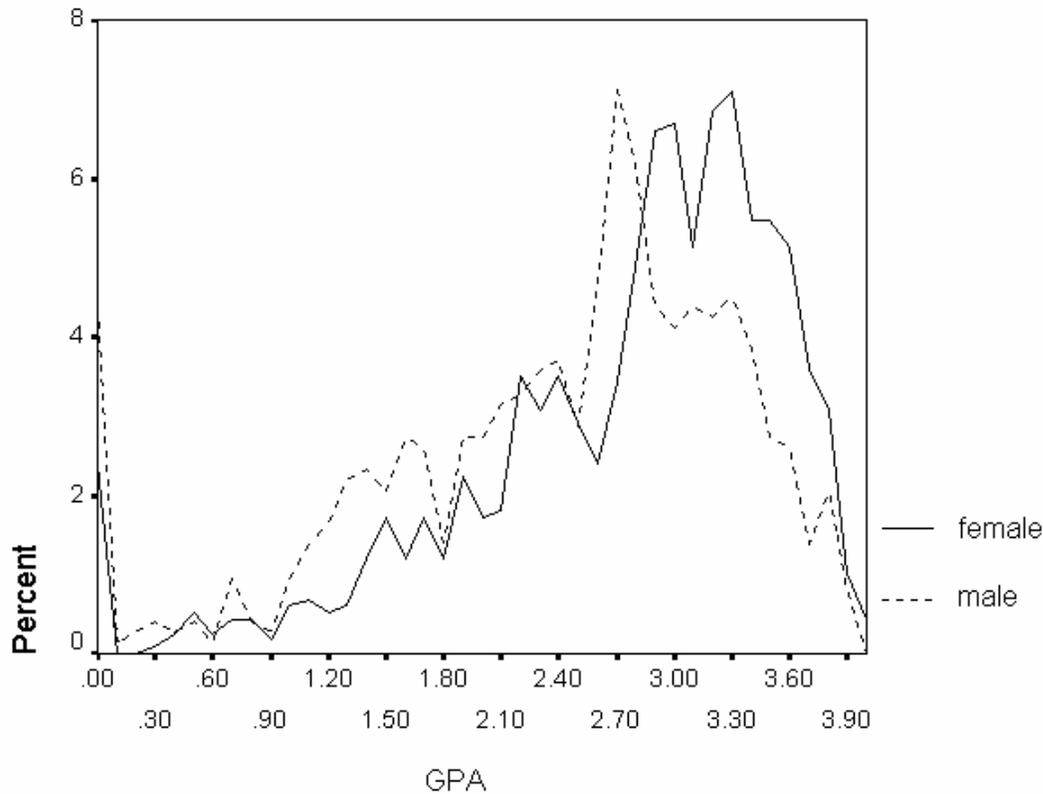


Table 15 shows that female students continued to earn a substantially higher mean GPA than male students five years after enrolling in FYI.

Table 15: Average GPA of male and female students 5 years after enrolling in FYI

Year	1995		1996		1997		1998		All years	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
N	129	203	114	205	162	275	175	270	580	953
Average GPA	2.29	2.62	2.45	2.77	2.38	2.82	2.51	2.83	2.42	2.76

These disparities between males and females need to be of concern, although the problem is not unique to, or created by, Queens College. Similar disparities and the widening gender gap in recent years have been noted in the CUNY system-wide retention report, and in a series of articles on nationwide trends in, among others, the *New York Times* (July 2006).

An FYI survey of entering students during their first two weeks at college suggests important differences between men and women that may contribute to this situation. Women are more likely to say that college students differ from high school students in being “more serious,”

“having more freedom,” and “having more independence.” Women are also much more likely than men to give as reasons for going to college “to be a success” or “to be independent/not be dependent.” These contrasts in values and motivations are consistent with the differences in academic performance and graduation rates. The College’s ability to intervene in such widespread sociological phenomena is likely to be somewhat limited, but it is a factor we should keep in mind in providing advising and other student support services.

2. Level of Student Preparation

Queens College admits only students with relatively good high school academic averages and for this reason an individual student’s high-school performance is not a good predictor of the probability of dropping out before degree. However, among local secondary schools that provide significant numbers of Queens undergraduates, it is possible to identify some whose graduates have on average a greater chance of remaining and earning their degree (among them such public high schools as Forest Hills and Martin van Buren, and private ones like Saint Francis Preparatory), and those whose graduates complete college at a lower rate (John Adams, Brooklyn Tech, Monsignor McClancy).

There are also significant differences among feeder colleges from which transfer students reach us. While transfer students come to us from over 200 other colleges, the vast majority come from a relatively small number of branches of both CUNY and SUNY. As shown in Table 3 above, students from some colleges are more likely to succeed.

3. Geography

Though the evidence remains inconclusive, local geography appears to play some part in students’ longevity at the College. Research correlating the distance that students travel to the College with their retention rate does not bear out the hypothesis that length of commute is a significant variable. However, it does reveal that there are very clear neighborhood clusters of high dropout rates, though they do not correspond to distance. This aspect of student demographics merits further study; time constraints of the present report did not permit a more sophisticated study of neighborhood influences.

1.3.2 Student Perception of their Experience at the College

An essential element of retention is students’ satisfaction with their overall experience at the College. We have several substantial sources of qualitative information about student attitudes, including a national survey and a CUNY survey conducted with all students, and a recent survey of transfer students, as well as data from the Dean of Students’ interviews with all students who drop out. In general, these sources indicate that students regret the lack of contact with faculty and fellow students, which leads to a weak sense of connection to the institution as a whole (this issue is addressed further in Chapter 2, Campus Life). In addition, a variety of academic obstacles are frequently cited as making the college experience daunting and frustrating.

1. National Survey of Student Engagement

The National Survey of Student Engagement (2005) ranks Queens College slightly below our peers for supportive academic and extracurricular factors that involve students in campus life, such as academic challenge, opportunities for active and collaborative learning, and student-faculty interaction. The report is available on the Queens College Institutional Research web

site. Although the sample size was too small to permit disaggregation by major, there are suggestions that different departments vary significantly in their success in engaging students. This merits further study, as it might reveal best practices that could be shared.

2. Student Experience Survey

This survey, conducted by the CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, measures students' satisfaction with their campus, academic opportunities, and other factors of college life (the report is available at www.oira.cuny.edu). On the positive side, institutional loyalty is high: 74% said there was no chance they would leave Queens College, 17% saw little chance, and only 9% a strong chance or some chance of leaving permanently. Of those considering transfer, half (12%) indicated they might move simply to another CUNY college. On the other hand, students expressed frequent dissatisfaction with chronic roadblocks to their progress, mostly the scarcity of courses: 41% stated that space was not available in courses they needed to take, and 37% complained that courses are not often offered at times when they can take them. It should be noted that similar course availability concerns were expressed CUNY-wide; however, it behooves us to consider ways to address this concern.

3. 2006 Survey of Transfer Students

A survey of full-time transfers who enrolled in Spring 2006 received only a small number of responses, so further research is required. Nevertheless, some findings are worth highlighting, as they parallel attitudes of freshmen. Academically, 82% agree that "Queens offers courses I would like to take." However, 49% disagree that these "courses are offered when I can take them"; specifically, 43% agreed that "I would like the college to offer more evening courses." Lack of communication is suggested by the 21% who disagree that "I feel knowledgeable about my major and other degree requirements." Extracurricularly, the great majority of transfers (79%) find students at the College friendly and welcoming. Nevertheless, most do not participate in activities outside class, others in only a few. One-third (33%) agree with the statement "I feel out of place at Queens College."

4. Dean of Students Survey

Among other characteristics of students who do not return to Queens College that can be seen in interviews with them by the Dean of Students Office, an analysis of the GPA's of freshmen who left after one semester shows grade averages that are either very low or over 3.0. This bimodal distribution suggests students may leave the college for two very different kinds of reasons, a conclusion confirmed, generally, in the interviews. Students in the first group, those with very low GPA's, tend to leave because they quickly realize they are not prepared for college-level work or are unable to devote sufficient time to it. Those with high GPA's tend to leave because they did well enough at Queens that they can transfer to a school perceived to be more desirable.

1.3.3 Chair Perception of Student Experience at the College

A subcommittee conducted structured interviews with 32 department chair and program heads to determine endeavors undertaken at the departmental level to promote retention and graduation. Reported below are the quantitative results, in Table 16, as well as qualitative information obtained from the interviews.

Table 16: Quantitative Summary, Department/Program Chair Interviews on Retention and Graduation Efforts

Number of Departments/Programs Responding	32
Procedures for Disseminating Information	
Departmental Web Site	30
Instructors speaking to their students in classes	26
Formal Departmental Advisement System	27
Orientation meetings	14
e-mail list of students	10
Posters or signs	31
Mailings	16
Newsletter	7
Procedures for Providing Advisement	
Advisement Required?	25
Advisement available in Evening	27
Advisement available on Weekend	6
Proportion of Students Seeking Advisement:	
High	17
Moderate	7
Low	8
Engagement of Students with the Major	
Orientation meetings	14
Talks, parties	14
Professional clubs	23
Student participation in dept. events	19
Special curricular offerings	11
Students work w/ individual faculty members	16
Publication of journal	3
Honors Events	31
Departmental Space for Students	26
Departmental Efforts to Promote Progress	
Advisement	32
Monitoring	11
Curricular Planning	16
Scheduling of Gateway Courses	20
Tutoring	21
Transfer Orientation Sessions	27

The chair interviews revealed significant qualitative information related to departments' efforts to retain their students. One important factor is the effort to enhance students' involvement with the department. A variety of techniques are used. These include:

- Student participation with faculty member in scholarly activity
- Departmental space for informal student activities
- Informal interactions between students and faculty
- Departmental social events involving students, faculty and staff

- Collaboration between students and faculty in planning departmental events, including planning colloquia, departmental parties, field trips, conferences
- Faculty open-door policy
- Internships
- Clubs sponsored by professional organizations in which both students and faculty participate

Departments also perceive a need for more support from the college in some areas, such as the maintenance of e-mail lists to reach students, website support, and department newsletter publication. The chairs also recommended that departments regularly publicize student achievements in department events, newsletters, and bulletin boards, and urged the provision of more ways for faculty and students to communicate electronically.

1.3.4 Need for One-to-One Experiences

Data from several sources converged on one problem area that the committee believes is strongly related to retention – the availability of one-to-one experiences between students and faculty and/or staff.

Opportunities for students and faculty to meet informally currently exist on campus on a limited basis. Humanities departments promote informal student-faculty interaction by organizing social events, such as lectures and parties. Science departments often rely on the time students and faculty spend doing lab research, with its opportunities for face-to-face meetings.

However, there is evidence that student retention at Queens College is negatively affected by “limited faculty availability for students outside of class” and by “uneven department practices in facilitating contact with faculty members.” This issue emerged in the September 2004 Report of the Enrollment Management Committee and the 2004 CUNY Student Satisfaction Survey, which showed that less than half of all Queens College students were “satisfied with academic advising” and less than a third with “personal counseling.” Similarly, the 2005 NSSE survey shows that Queens College – especially beyond the freshman year – ranks below the national average in such opportunities as “talking about career plans with a faculty member or advisor” and “discussing ideas from readings or classes with faculty members outside of class.”

In the department chair interviews mentioned above, the impact of the lack of student-faculty interaction on student retention rates was also cited. Most chairs emphasized the importance of one-on-one experiences between students and faculty and/or staff, but described as an obstacle the lack of appropriate spaces, such as departmental lounges and/or conference rooms. Throughout campus, informal interaction between students and faculty must occur primarily in spaces, such as hallways or elevators, not designated for this purpose. Although many full-time faculty have an open-door policy when it comes to their offices, there are few spaces for activities where faculty and students can meet casually and on neutral grounds. This lack of space impedes opportunities for face-to-face conversation and informal advisement and may be related to students’ sense of insufficient encounters with faculty and staff outside the classroom. The new cafés referred to below have proven very popular as meeting places, indicating the unmet need for such informal spaces. While the newly renovated Powdermaker Hall provides student lounges and study spaces, chairs of departments located in that building maintained

during their interviews that spaces there are not appropriately allocated and furnished. Chairs in other buildings also referred to “poor maintenance.” It seems likely that neither students nor faculty would want to linger in areas that are too small, poorly furnished, and/or not well taken care of. While it may not be possible to increase overall space, an evaluation of existing space for potential redistribution, along with more emphasis on improved furnishing and maintenance, may be desirable (see also Chapter 2, Campus Life).

1.3.5 Date of Matriculation

The date of matriculation – when the student first registers at the college – appears to be a factor which can help indicate the likelihood of success of students. This conclusion emerges from a study of freshmen enrollment patterns. We admit new freshmen over time during the spring semester. They are given a choice of orientation days on which to register for their first classes in the fall. These orientations are scheduled in June, the second half of July, and August. As shown in Table 17, 412 students chose an orientation and matriculated in the first half of June 2005. They completed an average of 30 credits in their first year at the college and 371, 90%, returned for fall 2006. However, the 165 students who deferred their orientation and matriculation until the second half of August completed an average of only 23 credits in their first year and only 68% returned for fall 2006 – dramatically smaller numbers. (For clarity, students who took immersion courses or were enrolled in SEEK are not included in these numbers.)

Table 17: Characteristics of Fall 2005 Freshmen by Matriculation Date

Matric. Date	No. Stdnts.	HS Avg.	SAT Verb.	SAT Math.	Credits Earned	Cum. GPA	Reg. F2006	% Reg. F2006
<mid-Jun.	412	86	527	551	30	2.92	371	90%
>mid-Jun.	329	85	504	529	27	2.72	296	90%
<mid-Jul.	8	75	496	544	26	2.79	5	63%
>mid-Jul.	191	83	500	520	26	2.57	151	79%
<mid-Aug.	83	84	475	537	26	2.59	66	80%
>mid-Aug.	165	81	475	518	23	2.43	113	68%
Sept.	14	81	538	558	27	2.77	9	64%

These differences persist into the second year, as seen in Table 18, which looks at the first two years of students admitted in fall 2004. Students who chose an orientation and matriculated in the first half of June completed an average total of 56 credits in their first two years – essentially full time – and 80% returned for their third year in fall 2006. In contrast, students who matriculated in the second half of August completed an average total of only 35 credits – essentially part-time – and only 62% returned for their third year in fall 2006.

Table 18: Characteristics of Fall 2004 Freshmen by Matriculation Date

Matric. Date	No. Stdnts.	HS Avg.	SAT Verb.	SAT Math.	Credits Earned	Cum. GPA	Reg. F2006	% Reg. F2006
<mid-Jun.	294	87	540	564	56	2.99	235	80%
>mid-Jun.	337	86	500	531	49	2.70	242	72%
<mid-Jul.	10	84	500	562	46	2.98	6	60%
>mid-Jul.	157	84	484	517	45	2.53	108	69%

<mid-Aug.	104	83	474	510	41	2.50	65	63%
>mid-Aug.	159	81	473	516	39	2.33	98	62%
Sept.	21	73	508	559	35	1.98	12	57%

Apart from the few students who enrolled as special cases in early July or in September, the retention rate decreases monotonically as a function of matriculation date. In addition, while it is evident from Tables 17 and 18 that late-matriculating students also have lower high school averages and SAT scores than early matriculants, the decline in retention rates (22 percentage points for first-year retention!) are larger than these HS average and SAT score differences would predict. Both these observations support the idea that matriculation date may be an important independent factor in outcomes. The college may be well advised to consider modifying its orientation and advising procedure to reach out to and engage its late-matriculating students, who are more at risk.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

Further responses to open-ended student survey questions are available in Retention Task Force Report, Appendix B.

Description of chair interviews in Retention Task Force Report; format and questions in Appendix C.

1.4 Recommendations and Conclusions

The College’s effectiveness in retaining and graduating matriculated students compares favorably to many other colleges and our performance shows modest improvement in recent years. This success is due to a coordinated, institution-wide commitment to creating and maintaining programs to promote student progress and retention, which is well established. At the same time, we are faced with systemic and individual factors that continue to militate against student success, and we are committed to identifying these issues and devising new ways to counteract or compensate for them. Historically, this task has been a challenging one, in the context of commuter education, for a student body many of whom are in equal parts energized and disadvantaged by their ethnic, economic, or familial situations.

1.4.1 General Issues and Answers

Known problem areas include the 4-year graduation rate, retention of transfer students, difficulties obtaining courses, and the shortage of one-to-one experiences between students and faculty/staff. One obvious remedy for these latter problems would be to increase the quantity and percentage of full-time faculty – a goal that is largely beyond the College’s control. Despite this limitation, we must strive to be a more familial, welcoming, and “human” place. There is considerable evidence that engagement with others is a strong factor in student success, and consensus that, while we already have a wide range of activities designed to involve students with each other and with faculty, some successful practices could be adopted by more departments, and we could all profit from paying more consistent attention to the social nature of education.

It is clear that we must maintain vigilance in our gathering of data and our assessment process, in order to respond in a timely and effective fashion to changes that affect students’ academic

continuity and success. Where possible, we aim to increase our methods of gathering knowledge about students' individual progress and to use those data in a program of ongoing analysis. We will continue to monitor year-to-year changes in rates of admission, acceptance, retention, and time-to-degree, and to analyze this evolution with an awareness of the diverse situations that affect various cohorts of students. The new general education requirements described below (Chapter 4), by increasing the exposure of students to the rationale and goals of our liberal arts curriculum, may have an additional positive effect on retention, but should also be monitored.

1.4.2 Specific recommendations

1. Broadening Application of Best Practices: Student Involvement

It is crucial to increase student involvement in campus activities (see also Chapter 2, Campus Life) and interaction with faculty. The numerous successful initiatives reported by individual departments for improving student engagement with their major should be publicized campus-wide, and other departments encouraged to adopt similar practices: e.g., regular departmental events to acknowledge student accomplishment, public postings of student accomplishments on departmental bulletin boards and electronic newsletters, enhanced systems for faculty-student communication online, and upgraded student lounge facilities, laboratories, and other communal spaces. Participation in student government and student clubs may also improve student engagement and should be encouraged.

2. Assessment as Advertising

The College should continue to compare its performance to local universities, and use this information to create a sense of pride in the college and to be competitive in recruitment of students. We should investigate whether students' perception of the reputation of the college influences retention, as suggested by transfer student data. If so, then the College should pursue means to enhance students' pride in the academic quality of the institution.

3. Further Research and Institutionalization

A standing Retention Committee should be established to implement Recommendations 1 and 2 by monitoring outcomes and developing measurements to supplement those generated by the CUNY Office of Institutional Research, the Education Trust, and other external organizations. This committee should expand the study of unexamined factors that may be significant predictors of student success. Variables identified by the Retention Task Force that have not yet been systematically analyzed include the number of credits transferred to the College and the position of Queens on the student's application ranking. In particular, the committee should complete the research discussed above into the geographical distribution of our students: Why do clusters of our less successful students come from certain neighborhoods? Close attention to student demographics – how neighborhood influences retention – is especially critical in our home borough, with its dynamically shifting, multicultural population.

4. Increase Liaison with High Schools and Transfer Colleges

Given the significant differences noted among area high schools and colleges in the preparedness of their graduates and the likelihood of their success, we should continue to recruit across the entire spectrum of our "feeder schools," but should work closely and actively with those schools whose students' success rates are lower, to 1) better identify those students most likely to

succeed, and 2) identify curricular and extracurricular modifications that could increase their students' probability of success. Research should continue on the reason for geographic clusters of low-achieving students, with an eye toward adjusting admissions policies and/or our outreach efforts to ensure student readiness for college. For both freshmen and transfer students, it might be well to increase incoming advising efforts for students from some high schools and transfer colleges to improve their likelihood of success.

5. Provide Additional Informal Interaction Spaces

Given the evidence suggesting a link between the paucity of personal interactions between students and college faculty and staff and the shortage of pleasant, open spaces on campus, efforts should be made to increase the availability of such spaces, through increased attention to space distribution, management, furnishing, and maintenance. The goal is to increase the rate of personal, face-to-face encounters between students and faculty and thus improve retention.

6. Course Availability

The studies described above indicate that for many students the availability of classes represents a serious barrier to their successful progress towards a degree. Some of this problem has to do with scheduling; students, especially those with their many extra-collegiate responsibilities, prefer classes at times that meet their schedules, a preference that is often impossible to satisfy. However, in some departments some courses may fill quickly, or not be available at any hour. This problem might be mitigated through several measures: expanding class size where appropriate, adding additional faculty where possible, or establishing a multi-year rotation schedule for key courses.

7. Expand and Diversify Advising Center Staff

In view of the evidence that the expansion of our Advising Center staff in recent years has played a role in the improvement of our ability to retain and graduate our students, further expansion would seem desirable. It would seem important that any such expansion should take into account the significant gender differences in student performance observed. The College has already taken steps in this direction – four new full-time advisors will be added to the Advising Center in the next few months.

8. Engage Late-Matriculating Students

As noted above, the date of matriculation appears to be an important factor in student retention and success. Of course, this does not mean that students will be retained better if we merely require them to matriculate in June rather than August – late matriculation is, presumably, just a sign of pre-existing lack of engagement with academic study. It does, however, mean that students who matriculate in late August are likely to be less engaged and could, accordingly, benefit from more intense intervention. Discussions on measures in this regard are under way. One idea is to reserve seats in FYI, which demonstrably improves retention, for late matriculants. Another possibility is to fill English 110, a composition class which most freshmen take, with a mixture of early and late matriculants.

8. Improve Transportation to Campus

We are a commuter school: our students can't come here if they can't get here. Complaints about parking and, more generally, about the difficulty of reaching us, come up often. The lack

of public transportation – as mentioned elsewhere we are the only one of the senior CUNY colleges not accessible by subway – is a serious problem for us, affecting retention and transfer. For many students even in the Borough of Queens, it is easier to get to a college in Manhattan than to Queens College. This issue is discussed further below (Chapter 2).

2 Campus Life

Standard 8	Student Admissions and Retention
Standard 9	Student Support Services
Standard 13	Related Educational Activities

2.1 Introduction

Campus life is a broad term embracing all the factors in the social and physical environment of Queens College that help to define its non-curricular atmosphere. The College has always recognized that students do not live by books alone, that their overall education is enhanced by offering opportunities to meet others with similar interests, to engage with them in activities of an educational, recreational, or social nature -- and the same for faculty. Attempting to define and assess the current campus climate raises basic questions: What brings students and faculty together, among themselves and with each other, outside of their shared academic work? What makes them feel they are welcome, and belong to a supportive community who are friends as well as colleagues? Of the multiple factors that can contribute to such a positive campus spirit and a more well-rounded experience of college life – or detract from them – this report examines in particular those needs and concerns most frequently noted by students and faculty as problematic, and/or as most influential on their interest in remaining on campus: physical facilities and the outdoor environment; opportunities for peer interaction through clubs, activities, and events, from intellectual to social and athletic; food services; and campus services and communications.

To begin preparation of this report and provide a broad overview, campus experiences and opinions were solicited from a representative cross-section of college constituencies. A series of focus groups, questionnaires, and interviews sought statistical data and individual opinions from day, evening, and weekend students and the full-time faculty. Their goal was to determine which aspects of the College's current campus life are engaging the community and which not, to propose possible future initiatives, and to solicit further suggestions. While students and faculty appreciate those efforts that have been made to enhance the quality of campus life, many feel that their extracurricular activity is neither as extensive nor intensive as they would like, and they consistently focus on a number of specific areas for improvement that would enhance the likelihood of their remaining longer on campus.

The first observation that can be drawn from such discussion is the nature of our social and economic context. As one component of an urban, public, and commuter university system, Queens College operates under certain inherent constraints, which can be countered only with great effort. Because, like all commuter colleges, we cannot take advantage of the 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week presence that creates an automatic extra-academic milieu, we need to work hard to promote campus life for students, faculty, and staff. Regrettably, even the best intentions on both sides will never fully overcome the underlying realities of life for our students, who must balance their desire for informal yet enriching activities among peers and mentors with the demands of their off-campus obligations. Between one-quarter and one-fifth of current students are parents, for example, and on-campus day care is an established service. Weekend

students express a desire for more activities during their days on campus, while at the same time conceding that they would have only very limited time to attend such events, due to work and family commitments. To borrow the title of the recent book analyzing the waning of community involvement in American culture under the dual press of economics and electronics, our students are often bowling alone.

Accordingly, the College has worked hard to put in place activities and facilities that can encourage both students and faculty to remain on campus between classes in a variety of physical and social settings. Thanks to an aggressive program of campus beautification that started four years ago, students are even more likely than before to exclaim that “the campus *looks* like a college.” In addition, the school offers numerous gathering areas, events, and organizations. In order to assure access for all students to this array of extracurricular activities, and a sense that they are direct participants in the operation of such services, all undergraduates pay an omnibus student activities fee, which, combined with a technology fee, is \$188 for full-time freshmen. The allocation of these funds to campus organizations and activities is the responsibility of the elected student government, the Student Association, thereby giving students a sense that they are stakeholders in these activities and ensuring that the overall program is directly responsive to evolving student needs and priorities.

While the College thus offers an extensive array of extracurricular opportunities, only a quarter to a third of students take advantage of them with any regularity. The wide majority partake only sporadically or largely ignore them. Most faculty, as well, do little on campus beyond their direct teaching and service obligations. Their reasons for doing so, and the factors that most influence our individual and collective sense of community -- for good or ill -- are outlined in Section 3. Section 4 offers a range of suggestions for changes and new initiatives that could enrich the campus experience, make it more inviting, and foster a greater sense of a cohesive and well-rounded college community.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

Report of Campus Life Task Force June 2006

2.2 The Current Situation: What We’re Doing Now

At present, the College supports and actively encourages a wide spectrum of programs to create an active and appealing extracurricular environment outside of formal classes; some are operated directly by the administration, others are largely run by students or outside contractors. In addition, there are a variety of mechanisms for disseminating information about these events. However, as the studies below show, most students do not take much advantage of these opportunities and remain on campus only for a limited time once their classes are over. Faculty spend more time on campus than students, but they too generally restrict their hours outside class to academic and administrative activities, rather than availing themselves of college-wide events and facilities.

2.2.1 Current Activities and Initiatives

1. Physical Facilities

As part of the recent campus beautification program, the College has added a variety of gathering areas around the campus: numerous clusters of seating have been prominently placed in the

central quadrangle, with its extensive and inviting lawns, and between academic buildings. Indoors, public lounges have been placed in the largest and recently renovated classroom building, Powdermaker Hall. There are two principal dining facilities: the main Dining Hall, with several options for Chinese, kosher, and other cuisine, and the smaller Student Union cafeteria, which is open fewer hours. Recently, two cafés have been added to campus: Books & Bytes, a cybercafé in the entrance to Rosenthal Library, and the Science Café in the Science Building.

2. Events and Activities

Every month the College produces, hosts, or facilitates dozens of special events and ongoing extracurricular activities. The Student Life Office, charged with overseeing and fostering campus atmosphere and activities, publishes a monthly college activities calendar, which in March 2006 listed 78 events. These are but the tip of an iceberg that embraces a remarkable spectrum, from fundraisers to music and theater performances, art exhibits and films, religious and political events, occupational advisement, club meetings, and college assemblies.

The College has instituted strategies to encourage participation in these activities and events. One strategy is the establishment of “free hours”: on Mondays and Wednesdays no classes are scheduled between 12:05 and 1:40, providing at least two weekly time slots when students and faculty are available to attend meetings and events. In addition, in 1996 the College instituted the CLIQ program, College Life Introduction at Queens, whose mission is to foster participation in campus events as part of each student’s entry experience. Entering students (except advanced transfers) are required to earn six “CLIQ points” by attending campus events within their first 24 credits.

3. Student Clubs

Queens College offers a wide variety of student clubs: the spring 2006 club list includes 67 organizations. These organizations vary in purpose and focus from ethnic clubs to academic, religious, sports, performance, politics, service, special interests, and advocacy. To encourage new activities to meet new demands and interests, the College procedure by which students can form new clubs is kept as simple as possible. Recognized groups are provided with office space and receive financial support through the student activities fee.

4. Athletics

The College supports an extensive program of organized athletic activities and opportunities, which have traditionally been an important means for fostering a sense of campus community and identification. At present there are seven competitive sports teams for men and eight for women, membership in which is merit-based. Queens College is the only CUNY school that participates in Division II sports, and the basketball, volleyball, softball, golf, and tennis teams have succeeded in reaching the NCAA Regionals twenty-four times in the last nine years. The men’s water polo team has been most successful, placing third in the NCAA Regionals in 1997 and 2002. In addition, the Athletics Department offers its facilities to all members of the campus community, including a swimming pool, tennis courts (new indoor courts were recently added), and weight room. Students have access to all facilities as a benefit of their activity fee; faculty and staff must pay an optional fee.

5. Communications and Publicity

The College attempts to disseminate information about campus events through a variety of media, generated by individual groups or by cross-campus entities, both in print and, increasingly, electronically. Evening students, with their low residency time, receive the majority of their information via the College website. Day students also get much of their information from the website, but they additionally utilize the student newspaper -- a popular and respected weekly, *The Knight News*, available free -- and flyers or posters distributed around campus. Students receive little information as yet by way of the newest electronic initiatives, including the upgraded email system (Lotus Notes), the Blackboard system for class websites, or the large plasma screens with changing announcements located prominently in several buildings around the Quad. Given the preference of many for electronic media, these new means of communication may be increasingly used as more students become aware of them and more faculty appreciate their potential advantages.

2.2.2 Current Levels of Student Involvement

Current efforts notwithstanding, the amount of time and attention that students and faculty spend on campus outside of formal academics is highly variable, and overall less than ideal. We studied student behavior in this regard in three ways: We organized a series of focus groups among day students identified by class; we passed out survey forms in the college dining hall in the day and the evening, and we distributed surveys in selected evening classes to obtain a statistically valid sampling of that population. One would expect the first two demographic groups, the focus groups and the dining hall sample, to be more similar to each other and less like the evening population. This is borne out by the results in Table 1. As shown there, evening students are least involved by all measures, spending only an average of 6 hours per week on campus outside of class time; they often come to classes directly from work and leave shortly afterward. The average for day students (focus groups and dining hall survey) is roughly twice that, about 12 hours/week, but even they do not linger appreciably. The same pattern is apparent in the extent to which students involve themselves in organized extracurricular activities. Evening students report an average of only 0.6 memberships in clubs and other campus organizations, meaning that a considerable number of them are not involved in any such groups; although day students report more involvement, on average each is in only one student club.

Table 1: Hours on Campus outside Class

Demographic	Focus Groups	Dining Hall	Evening Classes
Mean hours per week on campus	11.6	12.4	6.2
Mean # of club memberships	1.2	0.9	0.6

To determine what students do while on campus, the three demographic groups described above were asked "Please indicate the extent to which you engage in each of the following activities during your non-class hours at Queens College." As shown in Table 2, it is apparent that most students spend the bulk of their non-class time socializing informally with peers, eating, or studying. Rather less often, they are doing research or attending club activities. Only about one-third meet with faculty more than occasionally (one-quarter never do), use the exercise facilities, or attend academic events (lectures, etc.). Day students spend the bulk of their unscheduled campus time in the library, eating places, or in public open areas such as the outdoor Quad and indoor lounges; night students understandably spend little time outdoors or eating, and indeed

spend little time on campus at all. Although many departments provide lounges for their students, less than a quarter use them, just as three-quarters rarely or never use the campus athletic facilities or arts spaces.

Table 2: Activities Students Engage in while on Campus

Activity	Response	Focus Groups	Dining Hall	Evening Classes
Meeting with Faculty	Not at all	23	22	25
	Not much	33	39	37
	A little	32	28	28
	A fair amount	5	10	6
	A lot	5	1	4
Socializing with Peers	Not at all	11	3	22
	Not much	12	6	23
	A little	22	17	27
	A fair amount	25	33	20
	A lot	28	41	7
Attending Scholarly Events	Not at all	33	35	63
	Not much	26	35	20
	A little	26	21	15
	A fair amount	5	6	1
	A lot	6	3	1
Working Out	Not at all	58	49	69
	Not much	13	17	12
	A little	23	15	9
	A fair amount	2	12	4
	A lot	3	7	5
Studying	Not at all	11	3	20
	Not much	14	15	16
	A little	25	39	38
	A fair amount	30	27	15
	A lot	19	17	11
Eating or Snacking	Not at all	5	3	22
	Not much	22	10	31
	A little	35	28	23
	A fair amount	23	42	16
	A lot	12	17	6
Engaging in Extra-curricular activities	Not at all	32	31	61
	Not much	26	28	25
	A little	17	19	9
	A fair amount	11	11	0
	A lot	9	11	6
Running Errands (Bookstore, etc.)	Not at all	20	12	30
	Not much	29	36	40
	A little	31	35	25
	A fair amount	12	14	4
	A lot	5	4	3

Activity	Response	Focus Groups	Dining Hall	Evening Classes
Conducting Research	Not at all	33	27	30
	Not much	22	23	28
	A little	28	32	22
	A fair amount	12	14	10
	A lot	4	5	10

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

Campus Life Task Force Report, Tables 2, 3, 4

2.2.3 Current Levels of Faculty Involvement

Faculty were surveyed about how they spend their time, where they spend it, and what they think of existing campus-life initiatives. The results are shown in Table 3. Although faculty spend two or three times the amount of time on-campus that students do, only a small portion of that is truly extracurricular. Like the students, instructors generally feel that more could be done to provide a welcoming atmosphere, and alongside difficulties unique to employees, they share many of the specific student complaints that militate against remaining on campus more. (Adjunct faculty were not surveyed as they are not required or expected to remain on campus beyond contractually mandated instructional hours.)

Faculty spend an average of 24 hours per week on campus outside of teaching time. That time is frequently or very frequently devoted to meeting with students (70%), attending meetings of departments or committees (65%), or conducting research (45%) and writing (39%). Socializing with other faculty is common for only about a quarter of faculty, while advising student groups is rare, as is attendance at scholarly events. The overwhelming majority of faculty time is spent within their own offices (over 90%), and in other academic spaces such as labs or meeting rooms; faculty spend very little time in the dining or athletic facilities. Almost three-quarters use the library rarely or never, both because its increasingly extensive electronic holdings can be accessed from anywhere on-line and because, regrettably, longstanding and cumulative decreases in acquisitions funds have resulted in a physical collection that is sadly inadequate for serious research in most areas.

Table 3: Activities Faculty Engage in While on Campus and not Teaching

Activity	Responses	Percent
Meeting with students	Not at all	1.2
	Rarely	2.4
	Sometimes	22.6
	Frequently	44
	Very Frequently	29.8
Socializing with peers	Not at all	2.4
	Rarely	22.7
	Sometimes	46.4
	Frequently	21.4
	Very Frequently	6

Attending scholarly events	Not at all	4.8
	Rarely	27.4
	Sometimes	57.1
	Frequently	6
	Very Frequently	3.6
Writing (grants, papers...)	Not at all	15.4
	Rarely	22.6
	Sometimes	21.4
	Frequently	21.4
	Very Frequently	17.9
Scholarly discussions	Not at all	6
	Rarely	26.2
	Sometimes	44
	Frequently	15.5
	Very Frequently	7.1
Meetings (committees, etc.)	Not at all	1.2
	Rarely	8.3
	Sometimes	23.8
	Frequently	42.9
	Very Frequently	22.6
Research	Not at all	14.3
	Rarely	15.5
	Sometimes	23.8
	Frequently	26.2
	Very Frequently	19
Advising student groups	Not at all	28.6
	Rarely	27.4
	Sometimes	26.2
	Frequently	13.1
	Very Frequently	3.6

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

Campus Life Task Force Report:

Table 3, Faculty Non-Teaching Activities on Campus

Table 11, Faculty Non-Teaching Activities

Table 12, Location of Faculty Non-Teaching Activities

2.3 Assessment: Student and Faculty Opinions and Concerns

Assessment of the present campus environment aims to answer three intertwined questions: To what extent are students and faculty engaged in, and satisfied by, current extracurricular opportunities within the Queens community? What factors are most important to them in considering whether to remain on campus? And what changes or future initiatives would encourage and enable them to spend more time here?

While students and faculty do make positive comments about campus life, many problem areas are evident, and there is significant overlap between the major concerns of both groups. Five general problem areas are most prominent and consistent: physical facilities, special activities and events, clubs, athletics, and campus communications. (Further information about student experience of, and attitudes toward, their campus life can be found in the CUNY Student Experience Survey, which has been administered three times since the last self- study.)

While the College should clearly do whatever it can to resolve ongoing problems, the effect of such remediation may not be very great, due to conflicting pressures. As noted earlier, students here have more outside demands than at many schools. Faculty indicate that few of the suggested future options would keep them on campus longer, since they too have extensive demands on their time. Many faculty make extensive use of off-campus resources for their research, particularly in New York City with its wealth of intellectual resources in many fields from music to economics. And as electronic communication expands, it can be easier and more productive to work at home even when using the college library’s electronic resources. Table 4 below lists the responses of the three demographic groups described above (Table 1) to the question, “How much has each of the following initiatives contributed to you remaining on campus?” It is evident that some measures are much more effective than others. “Free Hours,” for example, the periods of time during which classes are not held, appear to keep many students on campus. In an effort to further encourage student activities, these free hours were recently expanded, to essentially 1.4 hours each Monday and Wednesday. Parking, or more precisely the lack thereof, appears on the other hand to be a significant deterrent to student presence on campus.

Table 4: Student Assessment of Initiatives to Keep Them on Campus

Initiative	Response	Focus Groups	Dining Hall	Evening Classes
Free Hours	Made it less likely	9	5	25
	Not much	22	19	22
	A little	20	18	10
	A fair amount	24	26	3
	A lot	22	31	3
CLIQ Points	Made it less likely	20	30	49
	Not much	30	31	30
	A little	24	22	10
	A fair amount	13	12	3
	A lot	5	3	3
Availability of Parking	Made it less likely	38	38	42
	Not much	15	15	22
	A little	14	18	12
	A fair amount	10	12	7
	A lot	18	15	11
Plasma Screens Announcing Events	Made it less likely	23	29	41
	Not much	31	34	33
	A little	22	22	12
	A fair amount	12	6	5
	A lot	5	7	4

Initiative	Response	Focus Groups	Dining Hall	Evening Classes
Events Calendar in Newspaper	Made it less likely	18	23	41
	Not much	25	31	26
	A little	25	23	16
	A fair amount	17	17	4
	A lot	8	6	7
Event Flyers/Posters Around Campus	Made it less likely	10	20	41
	Not much	22	20	25
	A little	33	27	14
	A fair amount	17	23	14
	A lot	12	9	3
Addition of Cafes	Made it less likely	16	17	36
	Not much	16	14	27
	A little	25	25	11
	A fair amount	24	28	12
	A lot	12	16	9

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

Task Force on Campus Life Report:

Table 6, Assessment of Initiatives

Table 13, Faculty Opinions about Enhancing Campus Life

Table 14, Faculty Complaints about Campus Life

Appendix A, Student Campus Life Questionnaire

Appendix B, Faculty Campus Life Questionnaire

CUNY Student Experience Survey: 1995, 2004, 2006

2.3.1 Physical Plant and Facilities

The College is blessed with an attractive, spacious, and green campus, and many students, particularly day students, feel the beautification of the campus exterior has a positive impact on their satisfaction with college life. However, some parts of the College's physical plant remain problematic: inadequate, poorly equipped, or poorly maintained buildings and other spaces are disincentives for students to linger on campus, and the parking shortage sometimes discourages them from showing up in the first place.

1. Comfort and Cleanliness

Complaints are common about poor health conditions and inadequate maintenance in a number of key buildings. Students and faculty are dismayed by the lack of cleanliness, particularly in many bathrooms, where old fixtures tend to clog and cleaning may not be frequent enough to correct such problems or remove the resultant odors. Such neglect, due in part to staff shortages, makes a strong negative impression, which extends to inadequate cleaning of the athletic/fitness facilities, some academic buildings, and dining areas. Indoor air quality is also a pervasive problem: ageing systems of heating, ventilating, and air conditioning produce chronic discomfort, ranging from stagnant air and lack of air conditioning to excess heat or cold, in older buildings such as Razran Hall, Remsen Hall, and the gymnasium. Newer buildings such as the Science Building and the renovated Klapper Hall have similar problems, due less to age than to

faulty design or construction. Klapper is also subject to floods which breed airborne mold. Unfortunately, the College is often not free to act independently on such matters: such flaws must be resolved through the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York, which holds considerable authority over campus buildings but remains separate from university control.

2. Parking

Parking is perhaps the single component of the physical facilities that most frustratingly complicates the stay on campus, and may even deter some potential applicants. Both faculty and students report frequent difficulty finding an available parking space, even when they have purchased a campus parking permit at what many consider an excessive cost. Our surveys suggest that evening students experience the most acute shortages, but all constituencies resent the time wasted circling around a full lot and the extra expense for a parking meter, and regret being too often late for class or at times unable to attend at all. This difficulty, while expressed as unhappiness with parking, is really about the difficulty of reaching us.

2.3.2 Food

Dissatisfaction with food services is widespread and strong among both students and faculty, which poses a problem since students spend so much of their time in cafés and other eating places. While both groups appreciate the new cafés on campus, the former faculty restaurant in the Student Union has been replaced by a smaller, less appealing eating area with fewer options, due in part to lack of usage – a classic “chicken and egg” problem – and much more needs to be accomplished. In particular, both groups would like expanded hours: the former closing of some facilities on Fridays was rectified in spring 2006, but food availability remains poor during evenings and weekends. Students are particularly concerned to increase low-cost dining options, as well as higher-quality foods, healthier food, and the ethnic diversity of menu offerings. Significant groups of students find kosher or vegetarian options very important (about 20% each); the dining hall already has a kosher café. In response to these widespread dissatisfactions, the College replaced the food services contractor for the entire campus with a new vendor beginning in September 2006. Improvements are expected shortly.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

Campus Life Task Force Report, Table 9: Opinions about Food Options

2.3.3 Activities and Events: Desire for more interaction with peers

Both students and faculty express a strong desire for more social or intellectual interaction with their peers and with each other, which they hope will establish that sense of community whose general lack so many deplore. Evening students show little enthusiasm for campus social activities, but others are interested in a wide variety of events, both actual and potential. Students suggest that the events most likely to draw them to campus are movies, trailed by live theater, rock or rap concerts, parties, and theme festivals; some hope for more debates on current social-political issues. They are generally enthusiastic about free hours, and might appreciate expansion of these activity slots. However, they evince very little interest in current offerings in sporting events, performing arts, or scholarly lectures.

1. Clubs

Students would like to have a wider range of choices for clubs; many express a desire for ethnic clubs, where they could celebrate their own background and culture with others on campus. They would also be attracted by more informal opportunities for non-competitive sports, such as creating intramural teams or making athletic equipment available both indoors and out (e.g., ball sign-out, ping pong tables). At the same time, although students want more options for events and groups, they dislike being compelled to participate. Many find the current CLIQ system meaningless and feel that gathering CLIQ points contributes little to their experience on campus.

2. Meeting Places

Both students and faculty would prefer more places for informal meeting and studying. Students would appreciate more comfortable study lounges around campus, and an area for playing video/arcade games. Faculty would be attracted by a permanent campus-wide lounge where they could meet informally over coffee, and a return to the former faculty dining room. Some suggest a desire to join colleagues for faculty workshops or lectures on pedagogical topics of broad interest, while a few suggest they would use the athletic facilities if the fee were removed. Any such initiatives should be viewed realistically: faculty have considerable expectations for research and creativity, outside lectures or appearances, and service to the profession and the public, all of which by definition draw them away from school, and the faculty survey reveals that few factors would increase their time on campus to a significant degree.

2.3.4 Campus Services and Communication

It is a regrettable discovery that the campus is not always as “user-friendly” as it could be, and that various practical obstacles can frustrate and discourage many students. Students stress the need for better dissemination of information on campus; their concerns include the difficulty of obtaining information, the unwillingness of staff to provide it in a helpful manner, and the unavailability of staff for evening and weekend students. Some campus services that exist are underfunded or understaffed; others, like faculty daycare, do not as yet exist.

1. Information Accessibility

Both students and faculty express concern about communication on campus. For students, the biggest issues are the ability to obtain official information from Queens College staff and consolidated information about extracurricular activities; faculty also express some frustration over the shortage of information about college events. It is currently very difficult for students to locate information about clubs and sports on the College website, which lacks any comprehensive list of student groups or relevant links. The fact that many students and faculty perceive a lack of offerings might, in itself, be evidence of this problem: the College in fact holds hundreds of events every semester, yet people seem unaware of the richness of that calendar. Our surveys unwittingly provide evidence for poor communication: Some students indicated they were eager to join clubs which they reported unavailable, but a dozen groups requested by them are in fact already active.

2. Staff Services

The perception is widespread that College staff are difficult to reach by telephone -- a serious problem for a commuter school, particularly for evening students -- and that once contacted, they are too often unfriendly or unhelpful. The Registrar’s office is particularly cited for over-reliance on voicemail and slow response to messages, but student desire for friendlier staff

extends to security, bursar, and food service employees. To some extent staff are handicapped by insufficient personnel, but it must be acknowledged that the increasingly common reliance on electronic substitutes, such as automated phone systems, is difficult for students, especially those with limited English, and unduly time-consuming. Students should not feel, as one described the first-year experience, “up the creek without a paddle.”

3. Child Care

The campus provides a child-care center for children of students, but none for faculty. The center is much in demand: in 2005-2006, all 117 of the children of students who applied for entry were accommodated (five children who had not yet met the age eligibility were denied). In many cases, the availability of reliable and convenient care makes the difference between a student, most often a young woman, being able to remain in school or having to leave – or, at the least, having to leave campus sooner each day, even while remaining enrolled. Nationwide trends suggest that the portion of our student body that is female, and thus most directly affected by this service, will continue to increase its existing majority. In a parallel development, as the College increases its already successful efforts to attract young female faculty, it is likely that demand for child-care from them will increase -- as it will in the minority of cases where the primary caregiver is a male instructor. This situation has recently been addressed: in an experiment made possible by increasing funding, child care is being provided on weekends for Weekend College students and to a limited extent weekdays for faculty and staff.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

Campus Life Task Force Report:

Table 5, Factors Enhancing Student Desire to Remain on Campus

Table 6, Assessment of Initiatives to Keep Students on Campus.

2.4 Recommendations and Conclusions

While many good things may be said about Queens College and its campus life initiatives, many opportunities for improvement are readily identifiable. The four most common complaints are about physical plant, food services, peer interaction, and communication. In addition to the intrinsic benefit for current students of improving significant deficiencies in these areas, the passion with which students discuss these issues suggests that a vibrant and attractive campus life is a key factor in student satisfaction, thus in retention, and thus in enrollment and tuition income. At a time when the City University must struggle to compensate for shrinking public support, improving campus life is an investment in the future. The College’s health, academic and fiscal, could be enhanced considerably, both immediately and over the long run, by measures to increase student and faculty satisfaction with the physical and social environment. These “soft” non-academic areas of college expenditure may seem most expendable for short-term needs, but in the long term they are indispensable.

Looking beyond practical recommendations, the College should also consider institutionalizing some ongoing mechanism for encouraging student and faculty input about their experience here, assessing the quality of that on-campus atmosphere, and making periodic recommendations. Such efforts could be coordinated at the administrative level or via the Academic Senate, with systematic input from faculty, students, and other campus constituencies.

The four problem areas outlined above represent issues which Queens College should address with campus life initiatives in the upcoming decade. While solutions should be sought for as many student and faculty complaints as possible, the following immediate suggestions address the major problem areas identified in campus surveys and other input.

2.4.1 Physical plant

1. Cleanliness

Campus cleanliness is a significant problem with a relatively simple solution. Campus maintenance staff must be encouraged to work hard to keep buildings clean. Bathrooms were the most frequent complaint, so setting up a regular schedule of restroom cleanliness checks in each building could potentially combat this issue. The fitness facility has also been heavily criticized for its unsanitary condition, and might benefit from increased custodial attention; this facility has just been renovated and re-equipped, which may alleviate this concern. As inadequate cleaning and deferred maintenance are the result of ongoing budget and staff limitations over which the College has little control, improved cleaning can only result if there is a consensus that this item deserves a higher overall priority than it receives at present.

2. Air quality

As with cleanliness, the ongoing problems with air quality in various campus buildings can be solved with more frequent attention from a larger staff. It is necessary to reach campus consensus that this issue is of a high priority in student and faculty satisfaction, in order to justify reallocating the necessary funds and staff. To the extent that air problems may result in complaints of unsafe working conditions, remedies for them should be treated not only as a means to increase campus attractiveness, but also to avoid potential difficulties with environmental regulating agencies.

3. Parking

The College recognizes both the seriousness of complaints about parking and the difficulties associated with expanding availability within limited space. We should pursue all reasonable options to increase the number of parking spots on campus. In addition, a usage analysis should be conducted to assess the degree to which students and faculty with parking permits are forced to pay for street parking. If this problem is pervasive, lowering parking fees might reduce frustration among those who find it necessary to “double pay.” However, lower parking fees would have the perverse effect of increasing demand for parking, exacerbating the parking shortage. Our parking problem is really a transportation problem. We have just over 1500 parking spaces, but 18,000 students and 3000 faculty and staff – obviously most people are not going to be able to arrive in cars, even if we could double the amount of parking. We are the only senior CUNY college that does not have a subway stop, so reaching us by public transportation requires transfer to a bus, adding at least 30 minutes to the trip. Since expanding parking could at best reduce our transportation problem, we might consider transportation alternatives, such as providing secure bicycle racks and encouraging the city to develop bicycle paths to campus, and facilitating access by public transportation, perhaps by improving transit bus access or instituting dedicated shuttle service from nearby subway stations.

2.4.2 Food

To the extent possible, the College should expand the hours of operation of food service facilities, particularly during evenings, weekends, Fridays, and days that classes are not in session. It should also increase the range of ethnic cuisines available, provide more low-cost food alternatives, and introduce more healthy options both in dining facilities and vending machines. Since these services are contracted out, the College should either encourage the current vendors to expand their hours and selections, perhaps providing incentives, or seek alternative vendors. The new food service vendor that recently started may help address this.

2.4.3 Peer Interaction; Events and Activities

Many members of the campus community express a desire to connect to other members of that whole more deeply. To encourage these interactions, the following initiatives are suggested:

1. As much as possible, develop comfortable indoor lounges for students and faculty. Investigate the practicality of turning the former bookstore space into a large cafe/arcade/lounge.
2. Establish non-competitive intramural sports teams. Many students and faculty want a chance to play on a team, but without the skill level and time commitment required of competitive athletes. Such teams may enhance a sense of community not only among team members, but also in others who come to watch friends, teachers, or colleagues.
3. Establish regularly scheduled or spontaneous events of high visibility on the Quad (see next section). As students and faculty stop to participate or observe, a sense of shared experience may develop.
4. Foster events that combine the efforts or memberships of multiple clubs to encourage broadening campus social networks.
5. While the current free hour was expanded a few years ago in a schedule revision, additional free hours on other days could be considered.
6. Consider allowing faculty to use fitness facilities without paying a fee.
7. Establish regular open film showings, particularly outdoors in suitable weather -- perhaps the single greatest wish expressed by students.

2.4.4 Communication

Communication appears to be a major problem at Queens. There are no easy solutions, but possible initiatives that might have a cumulative impact include:

1. Train staff to serve students with a more receptive approach so students can more readily gain information about important administrative topics. Incentives might be provided to increase approachability, such as awards for friendly service. Where possible, have staff available for phone queries without filtering students through a recorded answering system.
2. Use electronic message boards all over campus to list the present day's events, although the surveys suggest these may not be very effective.
3. A community service club has been successfully in engaging students on some campuses and might be worth experimenting with at Queens, especially given the rich diversity of communities in our neighborhood.
4. The President's Roundtables present speakers on topics ranging from economics in China to the perils of translation. These fascinating presentations could perhaps attract more students with more publicity.

5. Provide more prominence to events on campus on the College website, including an Extracurricular Activities link and frequent notices of current events on the home page.
6. Sponsor highly visible activities. Advertising and communication are less necessary for events that either have a high profile (large, loud festivals and events on the Quad) or are spontaneous (such as opening a trunk of balls in the middle of the Quad on a warm day). Such unplanned participation could make those involved feel more engaged in campus life.
7. Institute some high-visibility events which recur on a regular basis (e.g., movies on the Quad Thursday nights). Such events at predictable intervals might increase awareness.

3 Affirmative Action

Standard 8 Student Admissions and Retention
Standard 10 Faculty

3.1 Introduction

Affirmative Action has long been an integral component of campus policy. The College's website characterizes this concern as follows: "Affirmative Action goes beyond equal opportunity principles and affirms the college's commitment to achieve substantial participation by women and minority groups in all phases of its endeavors." The College's Affirmative Action Committee, with the full-time Director of Affirmative Action, monitors accomplishment of these goals, identifies patterns of discrimination against a group of people by any unit within the college, and presents proposals for remedial action to the President. As a public, urban institution dedicated to, in the resounding phrase coined for our founding school, originally the Free Academy of New York, "the education of the children of the whole people," CUNY and this College have always been dedicated to holding the doors to higher education open as wide as possible, permitting and encouraging all segments of the community to enter and thrive.

"The whole people" has a distinctive resonance and urgency in Queens, where demographic and social/cultural conditions have created a mosaic of ethnicities and cultures that is unique in our nation. Queens is the most racially diverse county in New York State and the population has also grown increasingly diverse in culture, language, and educational attainment. The borough has the state's highest concentration of Asians, residents who are multiracial or foreign-born, and non-citizens, as well as of population age 5 or over speaking a language other than English; it ranks third in concentration of African-Americans and Latin Americans. Most Queens residents (54%) speak a language other than English at home and 23% of them speak Spanish.

These cultural and ethnic realities have a direct impact on the city's higher education system, in part because the borough has a higher than average share of college-educated residents: 30% of the population 25 or over have a college or professional degree, and they generally expect their children to continue that pattern. Besides being highly motivated, Queens students are increasing in number: between 2006 and 2013, the New York State Office of Research and Information Systems projects a 3.5% increase in the annual number of high school graduates in Queens, from 13,647 to 14,122. By 2008, the borough of Queens, which now ranks second, is expected to overtake Brooklyn as the largest source of high school graduates in New York City.

Continuing and strengthening our current efforts is a critical priority because, despite some incremental improvement, the demographics of our students and faculty still do not fully reflect the demographics of the borough of Queens, nor that of New York City. In the past decade, several groups – notably Asians and women – have slightly increased their proportion among the student body and faculty. In contrast, Latin-Americans and especially African-Americans, despite their respective 25% and 19% representation in the borough, are underrepresented in the College's student and faculty populations. These deficiencies have negative effects on our academic programs, reducing our ability to attract and retain students of every ethnicity and

depriving our programs of the full range of diversity and perspectives available in Queens and the city. Based on federal guidelines and CUNY's definitions of protected groups, underrepresented minorities at the College include six groups: women, African-Americans, Latin-Americans, Asian-Pacific-Americans, Italian-Americans, and Native Americans or American Indians. Because the College has only small numbers of the last two groups, this report focuses on the other three ethnic minorities – those of African, Hispanic, and Asian descent – and, to a lesser extent, women.

The College mission is clear about our special responsibility to recruit, admit, retain, and serve the broadest variety of students. We are dedicated to preparing students to lead in an increasingly globalized nation and world, which requires direct experience of that world-wide diversity and active exploration of various cultures. The College's mission statement further recognizes the importance of a diverse faculty responsive to the needs and aspirations of students of all backgrounds. We therefore seek to valorize and increase faculty diversity in areas such as race, ethnicity, and gender. The following sections, which outline and analyze how well the College has done in recent years at attracting different groups, suggest that much greater efforts can and should be made to increase their participation.

To set the context for discussing trends and patterns of diversity, this chapter provides:

- 1) A brief account of Affirmative Action at Queens today and over the past decade since the previous Self-study Report.
- 2) An analysis of the data for students and faculty to examine patterns of changes, and campus-wide perceptions of the challenges, problems, and opportunities facing minority students, staff, and faculty. How well do we do in attracting different groups? What factors deter some groups from considering the College as a place to study, teach, or work? And, as a related question, how does the College assess its progress in affirmative action?
- 3) Recommendations for further action: What measures can be taken to remove or ameliorate any deterrents? What can be done to make the College more attractive to minority students, staff, and faculty?

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

Admissions Reports from Admissions Office (annual)
(demographics of admitted and registered students)
Report of Queens College Affirmative Action Task Force, July 2006
Queens College Fact Books 2005, 2004
CUNY Report, Affirmative Action Summary Data

3.2 Past Recommendations and Current Programs

Since the previous Self-Study and Middle States evaluation, the College has made some efforts to fulfill the recommendations in that report, which were intended to improve recruitment, retention, and comfort of minority and women faculty and students. Campus efforts to assure equal opportunity for faculty and staff are coordinated by the Affirmative Action Office, which is responsible for implementing affirmative action and nondiscrimination policies in employment campus-wide. The Affirmative Action Director monitors the recruitment and hiring process; provides training to faculty, staff, and administrators; and reviews complaints alleging policy violations. Similar concerns regarding the admissions process and the makeup of the student

body are the responsibility of the Admissions Office, reporting to the provost's office, and of the Student Affairs Division.

The previous Middle States evaluation report urged the College to continue its efforts to make diversity a fact of life on campus, both quantitatively and qualitatively, by increasing the absolute numbers of minorities and by instituting programs and policies to overcome some minority applicants' or students' perception that the campus environment was not welcoming for them. Much of that ambitious program, however, remains embryonic or unrealized.

3.2.1 Quantitative Efforts

The Middle States evaluation recommended that the College continue to diversify its faculty with respect to race, ethnicity, and gender through "active recruitment of female diversity applicants." The Report also recommended that the Provost clarify for departments "the policies and practices involved with diversity appointments." There has been some effort by the College and University to actively increase the number of minority faculty. All departments are urged to seek candidates from the widest array of sources and to identify and encourage minority applicants wherever possible, and the applicant pool for each job search is carefully screened to assure as much diversity as feasible. The Faculty Diversity Program, designed to directly increase hiring from underrepresented minorities, was initiated in 1988. Departments were given an incentive to identify and recruit minority faculty members by funding a special pool of supplemental faculty salaries, which did not "count" against a department's normal allotment of personnel lines. The program did not appear successful, suffered from other concerns, and was discontinued.

Further proactive activities have been limited. In practice, the Affirmative Action Office has been responsible for monitoring the hiring process (including civil service positions), by working with department heads to increase the diversity of the hiring applicant pool, with the Office of the Provost to identify opportunities to introduce new faculty to the campus community, and with student services to help promote a friendly campus environment. Resources are important; there are indications that advertising in multiple publications can result in a more diverse applicant pool. The Office has been constrained in part by lack of personnel and support budget. At present there is a Director, one full-time staff member, and one part-time staff member. Since the long-time Director was reassigned in 2000, the position has experienced more turnover, with two Directors in five years; a search for a new Director is now in progress.

The CUNY Council of Presidents' Policy on Revitalization of the University's Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity and Compliance and Diversity Programs (2003) calls for college Presidents to "publish annually a written statement that promulgates the President's commitment to workforce diversity" and to "expand the annual Pluralism and Diversity Report to include a Workforce Diversity Plan which identifies areas where focused efforts to increase workforce diversity will be undertaken." Such reports have in fact been issued annually, but recent issues have not included any specific institutional measures undertaken to improve the percentages of underrepresented groups.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

2000 Affirmative Action Work Force Report

3.2.2 Qualitative: Efforts to Improve the Psychosocial Environment

Beyond raw numbers and percentages, it is also essential to assess qualitative factors: How well do we foster an environment where all members of the College community feel equally welcome, valued, and supported? The 1995 evaluation report recommended that the College institute a variety of activities to address more subjective issues affecting the quality of life for minority members of the campus community and to assess the effectiveness of such initiatives. The College lacks a formal mechanism to assess campus climate and to monitor changes, making evaluation of current conditions difficult. In the absence of detailed longitudinal assessment, evaluation has primarily been achieved by interviews with various campus constituencies.

1. Students and Staff

The 1995 report recommended some specific initiatives that could contribute to minority student comfort, including the systematic collection of data on all students' participation in activities where they can learn about other cultures and ethnicities. It also called for the development of a mechanism to assess student perceptions concerning the quality of service by College staff, which was identified as needing improvement in working with students in general and specifically with minorities. The report further recognized the impact of staff sensitivity toward students on college climate and found a lack of formal procedures to assess the effect of training programs for staff or to evaluate staff behavior. It also underscored the importance of assessing campus climate and trends toward diversifying the student and faculty populations. More importantly, it called on all administrators who implemented recommendations based on official College planning documents to announce the outcomes of such implementation to the College community in a timely manner.

The Minority Student Affairs Office, a unit of the College Counseling and Resource Center, provides a range of programs and services to promote students' academic success and personal development. Ongoing improvements of the College's general Advising Center include a number of initiatives that are of particular help to all kinds of non-traditional students, such as the recent expansion of academic advising hours during evenings and weekends, when many minority students are on campus.

2. Faculty

It is not enough simply to hire more minority faculty; once they arrive on campus, mentoring and support are crucial to their adaptation and retention. The 1995 Report recommended that the Provost publicize information about the types of institutional support for minority faculty development and mentoring; such information is now readily available on the Provost's website.

With support from the Queens College Foundation, former College President Shirley Strum Kenny established the President's Research Award and Mini-Grant Programs for Innovative Teaching and for Departmental Diversity. These incentive grants resulted in such valuable and visible activities as an art exhibition at the campus's Godwin-Ternbach Museum, curated by

students, which examined the major social roles of women in history and their cultural representation. For some years, the President's awards for innovative multicultural projects and research have been highlights of the College's annual faculty/staff assembly. The University sponsors a Diversity Projects Development Fund which provides modest support to facilitate publishing by new minority faculty members.

3.3 Statistics and Analysis

This section gives a statistical overview of numbers and percentages of minority and women faculty and students that we now attract, compares those statistics to figures over the last decade, and then gives some indications of the students' subjective sense of well-being once they get here. To establish a context, the overall population of our home, the borough of Queens, is currently increasing slightly faster than the national average and now stands at 2.3 million. Of these, 52% are female, 46% are foreign-born, and 25% are not U.S. citizens; 33% are of European descent, 25% Latin-American, 19% African-American, 17% Asian-Pacific, and 4% multiracial.

Any such numerical summary and interpretation requires a procedural caveat: All these statistics are self-reported categories on the U.S. Census questionnaire. Moreover, at most educational institutions, including Queens, racial/ethnic identities are optional and self-reported; applicants for admissions or jobs may or may not volunteer such information. Unavoidably, then, as not everyone answers these questions, available data may not provide completely reliable estimates of minority populations in the College community. A growing number of people with mixed-race parents also present a problem in enumerating traditional categories of racial or ethnic identity.

None the less, certain constants as well as patterns of change can be discerned, however roughly. According to periodic reports from the Admissions Office, some of the relevant numbers have risen, but others have not improved appreciably in ten years. The College lacks an ongoing mechanism for assessing the more subjective measures of satisfaction.

3.3.1 Statistical Overview

1. Students

The College is home to over 18,000 students coming from 140 countries and speaking 66 languages. Overall, an analysis of enrollment and graduation rates over the past decade reveals increasing diversity in the student population, though that improvement is unevenly distributed. European-Americans are no longer the statistical majority on campus, being outnumbered by the aggregate numbers of underrepresented minorities. As of the most recent data (2005), 48% of our 13,000 undergraduate students are of European descent, 9% of African descent, 17% Hispanic, 18% Asian-Pacific, and 8% are foreign students (who may be from any racial/ethnic group). Of our 4,600 graduate students, 68% are European-Americans, 10% African-Americans, 11% Hispanics, 7% Asian-Pacific Islanders, and 5% foreign. In a trend that is increasingly common nationwide, women constitute the majority of our new undergraduate and graduate students (for further data see chapter 1, Retention). The following two tables show the changes in the racial distribution of undergraduate and graduate students between 1996 and 2005.

a. Undergraduate Students

Asians and Hispanics have made small but noticeable gains in undergraduate enrollment over the past decade, as shown in Table 1. The proportion of Asians in the College student body has increased from 15% to 18%, and that of Hispanics from 15% to 17%. In contrast, the proportion of African-American undergraduates has remained essentially unchanged at about 10%. (These data, provided by the Office of Institutional Research, impute ethnicity from Group 2 descriptions.) In the borough of Queens, Hispanics constitute the largest minority group (25%), followed by Blacks (19%), and Asians (18%). Thus, while the proportion of Asian students approximates their group’s overall presence in the borough, the proportion of Hispanic and Black students at Queens is lower than in the borough as a whole. At the same time, the College’s record of maintaining a roughly constant share of Black students actually stands out as a positive achievement within CUNY, where since 1999 the percentage of Black students at most other senior colleges has dropped considerably – a trend also noted nationally. Despite such small comfort, the low representation of Blacks remains a serious concern.

Table 1: Queens College Undergraduate Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity: 1996 – 2005

Ethnicity	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Non-Resident Alien	454 3%	399 3%	387 3%	444 4%	465 4%	542 5%	591 5%	726 6%	700 6%	996 8%
Black, Non-Hispanic	1,296 10%	1,273 10%	1,168 10%	1,215 11%	1,140 10%	1,141 10%	1,182 10%	1,185 10%	1,238 10%	1,190 9%
Am Ind/Native Alaskan	14 0%	16 0%	13 0%	15 0%	13 0%	13 0%	16 0%	15 0%	14 0%	15 0%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1,997 15%	1,932 16%	1,927 16%	1,851 16%	1,923 18%	2,117 19%	2,326 19%	2,407 19%	2,435 19%	2,384 18%
Hispanic	1,893 15%	1,867 15%	1,845 15%	1,804 16%	1,657 15%	1,693 15%	1,840 15%	1,934 16%	2,064 16%	2,157 17%
White, Non-Hispanic	7,348 57%	6,953 56%	6,680 56%	6,237 54%	5,766 53%	5,707 51%	6,057 50%	6,079 49%	6,177 49%	6,276 48%

It is useful to examine other undergraduate cohorts who enter with different backgrounds and expectations, particularly students in the SEEK program and transfer students. The SEEK program (Search for Education, Elevation, and Knowledge) is designed to provide opportunities for aspiring students who are educationally under-prepared and economically disadvantaged, by supporting them with supplemental assistance in both academic and practical matters (instruction, tutoring, financial aid, counseling). SEEK enrollment shows a rising presence of Asian-Americans (up from 25% to 34%) and a constant share of Latin Americans (roughly 1/3), while the involvement of African-Americans has declined from 17% to 10%.

Table 2: Queens College SEEK Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity: 1996 – 2005

Ethnicity	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Non-Resident Alien	1 0%	4 1%	3 0%	0 0%	2 0%	7 1%	1 0%	13 2%	12 1%	14 2%
Black, Non-Hispanic	145 17%	130 17%	114 14%	102 14%	98 12%	88 10%	91 11%	81 10%	105 12%	83 10%
Am Ind/Native Alaskan	1 0%	1 0%	1 0%	1 0%	1 0%	3 0%	2 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%
Asian/Pacific Islander	223 25%	197 25%	246 30%	213 28%	249 30%	270 32%	265 33%	260 32%	283 32%	290 34%

Hispanic	292	258	280	254	257	257	231	232	261	271
	33%	33%	34%	34%	31%	30%	28%	29%	30%	32%
White, Non-Hispanic	215	195	189	182	223	231	225	222	212	191
	25%	25%	23%	24%	27%	27%	28%	27%	24%	22%

These patterns of racial distribution in regular admissions and in SEEK admissions hold for both first-time freshmen and transfer students. Blacks persistently account for 3-4% of regular admissions as first-time freshmen, compared to 7-8% for Asians and 6-7% for Hispanics. During the same period, the percent of transfer students admitted who are Black has remained constant at 6%, while the proportion of Asian and Hispanic transfers has increased from 7% to 10% each.

Table 3: New Freshman and Transfer Students by Race/Ethnicity Fall 1996 – Fall 2005

Fall of		First-time Freshmen					
		NONRES. ALIEN	BLACK, NON-HISPANIC	AM. INDIAN/NATIVE ALASK.	ASIAN PACIFIC ISLAN.	HISPANIC	WHITE, NON-HISPANIC
1996	Regular	55	86	1	188	163	587
	SEEK	1	16	0	25	32	29
1997	Regular	65	93	1	214	148	614
	SEEK	4	16	0	45	65	44
1998	Regular	49	86	0	161	140	560
	SEEK	3	16	1	103	71	59
1999	Regular	48	88	2	160	125	471
	SEEK	0	13	0	29	54	47
2000	Regular	56	62	0	184	128	445
	SEEK	2	27	0	79	74	74
2001	Regular	66	67	0	257	138	541
	SEEK	6	20	1	73	56	46
2002	Regular	70	80	0	231	119	592
	SEEK	0	16	0	53	40	32
2003	Regular	69	90	1	234	145	596
	SEEK	1	19	0	61	60	54
2004	Regular	83	81	2	213	168	594
	SEEK	3	30	0	75	85	50
2005	Regular	126	91	1	228	191	693
	SEEK	7	10	0	72	57	33
		Advanced Standing Transfers					
1996	Regular	77	138	1	168	159	770
	SEEK	0	6	0	1	5	3
1997	Regular	78	142	3	154	167	688
	SEEK	0	3	0	2	4	4
1998	Regular	66	124	0	157	165	686
	SEEK	0	2	0	4	3	2
1999	Regular	76	157	1	194	185	602
	SEEK	0	2	0	1	4	4
2000	Regular	90	129	2	182	162	633
	SEEK	0	1	0	2	1	3
2001	Regular	102	139	1	215	195	654

	SEEK	0	1	0	4	6	1
2002	Regular	124	175	2	294	266	792
	SEEK	0	3	0	8	7	4
2003	Regular	98	158	0	267	276	817
	SEEK	1	2	0	6	4	6
2004	Regular	101	192	2	235	286	802
	SEEK	0	4	0	5	9	6
2005	Regular	145	175	3	310	305	852
	SEEK	0	3	0	8	6	5

Several demographic factors may contribute to this seemingly inequitable representation. Queens is the only large county in the US in which the average income of black families exceeds that of white families. (See Sam Roberts, “In Queens, Blacks Are the Have-Nots No More,” New York Times, October 1, 2006.) In addition, the average family income is well above the national average. Many of these families have high expectations and high aspirations for their children – which often include elite private colleges. Increasingly, the College draws students from largely white Nassau County, east of Queens County. Also, many black students in Queens attend other CUNY schools in the borough of Queens, at least as an initial college experience, though they may come to the College to finish their upper level coursework. There are two community colleges in the borough, both with significant black populations, as well as a sister senior college nearby with a large percentage of black students. Furthermore, Queens is the sole senior CUNY college not accessible by subway – a limitation likely to weigh most heavily on low-income minority populations, for whom public transportation is often a necessity. Also, apart from two Manhattan colleges (Hunter and Baruch), most CUNY colleges draw very heavily from their immediate neighborhoods. Queens is the only one of these other senior colleges which does not have large minority-populated areas nearby.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

Affirmative Action Task Force Report, 2006: Table 3, Table 4

b. Graduate students

In the population of graduate students, who make up roughly a quarter of the student body, the presence of white non-Hispanics has declined over the years, as shown in Table 4. However, unlike the undergraduates, they have continued to be the statistical majority, representing two-thirds of graduate enrollment. The proportion of African-Americans among graduate students remained stable at 10%, while Hispanics increased their participation from 7% to 11%. Asians also increased their representation from 6% to almost 8% in the past decade. As with the undergraduates, these modest gains are encouraging, but they do not involve all groups or reach each group’s share of the total area population.

Table 4: Queens College Graduate Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity: 1996 – 2005

Ethnicity	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Non-Resident Alien	151	171	201	219	254	224	209	179	149	210
	4%	4%	5%	5%	6%	5%	5%	4%	3%	5%
Black, Non-Hispanic	334	321	345	372	396	423	442	453	483	452
	9%	8%	8%	9%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%
Am Ind/Native Alaskan	4	4	3	3	3	3	10	7	4	3
	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Asian/Pacific Islander	219	289	300	304	335	331	346	344	362	333
	6%	7%	7%	7%	8%	8%	8%	7%	8%	7%
Hispanic	251	309	317	359	336	373	447	485	471	498
	7%	8%	8%	9%	8%	9%	10%	10%	10%	11%
White, Non-Hispanic	2,672	2,847	3,009	2,863	2,773	2,824	3,138	3,179	3,298	3,124
	74%	72%	72%	69%	68%	68%	68%	68%	69%	68%

This graduate student pattern is apparent in admissions as well, as shown in Table 5. The proportion of white non-Hispanic students has declined slightly, from 74% to 68%, while that of Hispanics and Asians has increased modestly, from 8% to 11% and 6% to 8% respectively. There was little change in the proportion of Black students enrolled each year.

Table 5: Queens College New Graduate Students by Race/Ethnicity: 1996 – 2005

Ethnicity	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Non-Resident Alien	47	55	83	78	82	57	58	59	48	69
	5%	5%	8%	9%	9%	6%	5%	4%	4%	6%
Black, Non-Hispanic	82	79	74	77	90	80	94	127	110	97
	9%	7%	7%	9%	10%	9%	8%	10%	8%	9%
Am Ind/Native Alaskan	0	1	1	1	1	1	4	0	0	1
	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Asian/Pacific Islander	56	78	83	53	74	71	86	86	101	94
	6%	7%	8%	6%	8%	8%	7%	6%	8%	8%
Hispanic	70	100	71	80	87	84	111	143	127	119
	8%	9%	7%	9%	10%	9%	9%	11%	10%	11%
White, Non-Hispanic	634	791	744	573	572	646	853	911	939	728
	71%	72%	70%	66%	63%	69%	71%	69%	71%	66%

c. Graduation rates

Students' success, as measured by graduation rates, also varies widely by ethnic background. Despite their steady decline in the College population, European-Americans continue to receive the highest share of undergraduate and graduate degrees awarded in the past decade. Their undergraduate degree share is now 53%, down from 63% in 1996; for the M.A., 71%, formerly 76%. During the same period, African-Americans slightly increased their share of these degrees awarded, from 7% to 9%. Asians and Hispanics too have increased their shares of degrees awarded, from 14% to 18% (Asians) and from 11% to 14% (Hispanics) in baccalaureate, and from 6% to 7% (Asians) and from 5% to 8% (Hispanics) in master's degrees.

There are racial disparities in the graduation rates of entering full-time freshmen. Specifically, there is greater fluctuation in graduation rates among Europeans and Latino/as than among Africans and Asians. The proportions of white freshmen who obtained their bachelor's degrees in 6 years (for the 1997, 1998, and 1999 admission cohorts) were 54%, 60%, and 62%, compared to 44%, 39%, and 31% for Hispanics; 56%, 56%, and 51% for Asians; and 54%, 47%, and 52% for Blacks. These encouraging figures for Blacks suggest that once they are admitted to the College, they perform better than Hispanics and almost as well as Asians. (See further Chapter 1, Facilitating Transfer and Retaining Students.)

In sum, compared to other CUNY senior colleges, Queens continues to have the lowest undergraduate representation of African-Americans. Available data suggest that Asians and Hispanics, whether as first-time freshmen or transfer students, are making steady gains in regular and SEEK enrollments at Queens, while the proportion of Blacks in SEEK has plummeted.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

Affirmative Action Task Force Report, 2006: Tables 6, 7A, 7B, 7C

2. Faculty, Professional Staff, and Administration

As with the student body, patterns of change over the past decade among College instructional, supervisory, and service personnel indicate sporadic areas of progress in increasing minority representation, but the increases are generally modest and are not evenly distributed. However, it must also be noted that while the College draws its student body overwhelmingly from the immediate area, faculty and administrators are recruited and selected from a nationwide and even international pool of academics, whose makeup is not congruent with that of our own local area. The goal of having our faculty match closely the ethnic makeup of our own students is limited by the total number of minority faculty available, a factor not under our control, and by our limited economic competitiveness in a “seller’s market.”

The limited number of minority faculty nationwide, coupled with the large number of schools who desire them for reasons similar to ours, make affirmative-action recruitment a competitive and high-stakes process in which CUNY, under the budget austerities that have characterized the last few decades, is not able to compete well. As an example, we tried to recruit a young African-American woman from a wealthier private school and got her seriously interested, but when our salary offer was merely the same as her existing compensation and the proposed teaching load was higher, she laughed, then cried, then stayed where she was.

a. Faculty

Since the last Self-Study, there has been some improvement in the representation of Hispanics, Asians, and women in administration, faculty, and support staff. Of all the underrepresented groups, women have made the most gains at Queens, followed by Asians and Hispanics; in contrast, blacks are persistently underrepresented among faculty when compared to CUNY and senior colleges. In 2004, 40% of our 540 full-time faculty members were female; 5% were of African descent, 5% Latino/a, 10% Asian-Pacific, and 75% European. The proportion of Asian faculty at Queens exceeds that at CUNY and the other senior colleges: in 2004, Asians accounted for 6% of full professors, 11% of associate professors, and 18% of assistant professors at Queens. The proportions of Hispanics in full and associate professor ranks are comparable to those at CUNY and senior colleges: as of 2004, 4% of full professors, 7% of associate professors, and 5% of assistant professors. Despite small but steady increases in participation, Blacks are still severely underrepresented among faculty across ranks at Queens, when compared to those at CUNY senior colleges. In 2004, 7.1% of full professors at CUNY senior colleges were Blacks, compared to only 2.9% at Queens. The percentage for assistant professors is better (5.8%), but still well below the senior college average (10.7%).

One-third of the full professors at CUNY and senior colleges are women, compared to only 23% at Queens. However, this disparity will be more than overcome as current junior personnel move

upward: since 1999 women comprise more than half of the assistant professors at Queens, and their proportion has increased in the past 5 years, from 52% in 1999 to 55% in 2004. The rising trends of women's representation in administration and teaching indicate that the College is more successful at hiring and promoting women than racial minorities.

Tables 6 and 7 show patterns of change in the racial and gender composition of instructional faculty and staff from 1996 to 2004. Asians have made the greatest advance: their proportion doubled, from 5.5% to 11.1%. The proportion of Hispanic professors at Queens has also increased (with some fluctuation), from 3.2% to 5.3%, though their proportion here still lags behind their overall share at CUNY and the senior colleges. Blacks have made minimal progress overall during the same period: although their proportion increased slightly from 4.3% in 1996 to a peak of 5.6% in 1999, it fell again to 4.8% in 2004. (To some extent this reflects the statistical fluctuations of small numbers.) While this lack of improvement is common to all CUNY schools and the senior colleges, the proportion of Blacks at Queens is consistently less than half their proportion for all CUNY schools and for senior colleges. None of these three groups comes close to its respective proportion in the borough's population.

Table 6: Full-Time Instructional Faculty by Race and Gender, Fall 1996: CUNY, Senior Colleges, and Queens College

		Dean, Admin.	Professor	Inst, Lec	HEO Series	Lab Tech
Total (N)	CUNY	329	4716	528	1800	413
	Sr. Coll.	257	3661	302	1395	274
	Queens	22	563	51	133	41
Black	CUNY	62	497	142	433	91
	Sr. Coll.	45	352	80	325	64
	Queens	1	24	10	19	5
	% (Qns)	4.5%	4.3%	19.6%	14.3%	12.2%
Hispanic	CUNY	6	171	28	111	38
	Sr. Coll.	4	123	10	80	11
	Queens	0	19	2	7	0
	% (Qns)	0.0%	3.4%	3.9%	5.3%	0.0%
Asian/Pacific Islander	CUNY	12	263	22	107	34
	Sr. Coll.	10	208	10	85	27
	Queens	0	31	1	8	3
	% (Qns)	0.0%	5.5%	2.0%	6.0%	7.3%
Female	CUNY	129	1852	288	1044	119
	Sr. Coll.	100	1385	149	813	62
	Queens	7	239	24	79	11
	% (Qns)	31.8%	42.5%	47.1%	59.4%	26.8%

Table 7: Full-Time Instructional Faculty by Race and Gender, Fall 2004: CUNY, Senior Colleges, and Queens College

		Dean, Admin.	Professor	Inst, Lec	HEO Series	Lab Tech
Total (N)	CUNY	372	5112	584	2307	460
	Sr. Coll.	285	3897	283	1751	278

	Queens	21	496	44	156	39
Black	CUNY	69	532	162	622	84
	Sr. Coll.	52	372	88	482	53
	Queens	0	24	5	24	5
	% (Qns)	0.0%	4.8%	11.4%	15.4%	12.8%
Hispanic	CUNY	42	342	69	343	96
	Sr. Coll.	25	230	23	225	27
	Queens	0	26	3	12	4
	% (Qns)	0.0%	5.2%	6.8%	7.7%	10.3%
Asian/Pacific Islander	CUNY	19	484	32	181	53
	Sr. Coll.	14	380	16	135	42
	Queens	2	55	1	13	5
	% (Qns)	9.5%	11.1%	2.3%	8.3%	12.8%
Female	CUNY	152	2191	318	1432	140
	Sr. Coll.	115	1602	135	1083	77
	Queens	10	199	22	94	13
	% (Qns)	47.6%	40.1%	50.0%	60.3%	33.3%

b. Administration: Racial minorities were and still are underrepresented in the College administration, ranging from college executive officers to deans to administrators. Asians have made some headway in administrative positions in recent years. By comparison, women have made substantial progress in administration, especially in holding deanships. Women at Queens are doing as well as or even better than their peers at CUNY and senior colleges occupationally.

c. Professional Staff: Among non-teaching instructional staff, the proportions of Asians holding titles of HEO (Higher Education Officer) and CLT (College Laboratory Technician) at Queens are comparable to those at CUNY and senior colleges. Blacks are underrepresented in the middle and lower ranks of HEOs and CLTs, though they constitute a higher proportion of HEOs than they do of the teaching faculty, as shown in Table 7.

In short, the College has not yet achieved parity with CUNY and senior colleges in terms of minority representation in administration and instructional staff. Proportional disparities in representation compared to CUNY and senior colleges persist among both administrative personnel and full-time faculty, but are closer to the system average among professional staff.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

Affirmative Action Task Force Report, 2006: Tables 8 to 16
Affirmative Action Summary Data by College, Ethnicity, and Gender
(Fall 2004), volume I: Instructional Staff (CUNY Office of
Compliance and Diversity Programs)

3.3.2 Campus Climate: The Social-Psychological Welcome Factor

A variety of factors can affect on-campus satisfaction, and hence retention and academic success, of underrepresented minorities at Queens. Anecdotal evidence suggests that minority students often perceive the climate on campus as less than fully welcoming to them and their concerns,

and that this perception is shared by observers at other area educational institutions. It is obviously a matter of great concern whenever any individual student or group feels that certain offices, departments, or faculty are indifferent to their needs, and even treat them differently based on race/ethnicity. Other problems are not so much ethnic as economic, though they affect our students disproportionately because minority families are on average less wealthy than the majority; such societal problems are difficult to overcome in general, and are out of College control. Minority faculty do not report individual discrimination, but they do shoulder additional burdens, due to their relatively small numbers and their economic status, that can make their work experience here more taxing and potentially less appealing.

1. Students

A number of aspects of College life may negatively affect the enrollment and experience of minority students. Some are essentially psychological: Students uncertain about how to navigate a new and unfamiliar environment do not see many faculty like themselves on campus, do not know what to ask or whom to approach for help and advice, and may conclude that insufficient sensitivity to different cultures prevails. Others stem from collective social factors, since some CUNY schools in Queens and Brooklyn attract far larger proportions of African-American students. Reasons for the greater popularity of those schools may range from better accessibility by public transit to differences in curriculum. Anecdotally, however, it has been suggested that those students concerned about the potentially negative aspects of being a minority within their campus community “self-segregate” into institutions where they will be numerically more prevalent.

Some factors working against wider minority enrollment are economic in nature: To the extent that minority students tend to be poor, they are hit harder by shortages of services and financial support. For example, the courses and support services available to evening students are more limited than for day students, but more minority students have to take night classes because of work or family obligations. Our location does not provide convenient access by public transportation for those who cannot afford cars or parking. Students with limited income are more dependent on financial assistance and must “follow the money” – a path that seldom leads to the doors of CUNY. The scholarships we can offer high achievers are not as attractive as those available from many private schools of equal or greater rank. Consequently, for talented minority students, Queens is often a “safety school” – we admit them, but they go elsewhere. This pattern is particularly apparent in the new CUNY Honors College; while we receive applications from highly qualified minority students, and make them attractive offers, their show rate is very low, and follow-up studies show they matriculate at prestigious private schools.

2. Faculty

Some minority faculty experience a greater burden of advising, mentoring, and role-modeling than other faculty members, because their numbers are so small relative to the numbers of students who seek out someone from a familiar background for help and guidance. Like their students, minority faculty face some pressures that are basically economic: the cost of living in New York is high, and affordable housing is hard to find, especially as CUNY salaries remain behind some other area schools. Like students lured away by necessary scholarships, minority faculty are tempted to move elsewhere by more competitive job offers. Such disincentives will remain difficult to overcome without a broad and sustained commitment to restoring the

University's budget to adequate levels – a matter beyond CUNY's control and, in the current political climate, not soon likely.

Another potentially unattractive economic feature of CUNY life concerns primarily women: Although women constitute a growing majority of new junior faculty, there is no provision for paid parental leave at CUNY. While this is an issue for working women nationwide, it is a particularly acute disincentive for new faculty who, at the age when they are generally applying for entry-level jobs, have often postponed childbearing to complete graduate school and are under pressure to have children while they can. If we cannot offer some accommodation to enable them to combine the early stages of both career and family, we may lose them. One new initiative addressing this situation is the inception of a pilot day-care program for children of faculty and staff, which opened in Spring semester 2007.

3.4 Recommendations

If the College is to make significant progress toward its goal of increasing the number of minority students and faculty, it is essential to make and publicize a clear commitment and to provide adequate and unequivocal support. Students, faculty, and the entire area community must see tangible evidence that improvement of current under-representations is an institutional and educational priority. And it is necessary to be vigilant in gathering data on our progress, to assess that progress at regular intervals, and to formulate further action pursuant to that assessment.

Until now, the College administration has lacked sufficient personnel and resources to be proactive on this issue. The Affirmative Action Office concentrates on ensuring the College's compliance with proper search procedures, and the Affirmative Action Committee is concerned primarily with complaints; neither has much time to look beyond the day-to-day enforcement of existing policies.

1. The Affirmative Action Office should be adequately staffed, with a full-time Director, Assistant Director, and secretary. The College should establish a permanent Commission on Affirmative Action charged to pursue the goal of improving minority representation. The College and University should provide resources to the Commission and publicity about the importance and commitment of the College to this initiative.
2. The Commission should clarify what the College means by "affirmative action," a term whose meaning has changed over time. The term "diversity" often commingles with affirmative action and dilutes the original thrust of affirmative action, which was to correct historical injustice to African-Americans, other minority groups, and women. The College policy on affirmative action states that "Affirmative Action goes beyond equal opportunity principles and affirms the college's commitment to achieve substantial participation by women and minority groups in all phases of its endeavors," but the emphasis in the rest of the policy is on compliance with law and grievance procedures. While it is important to enforce existing legal constraints, avoiding trouble is insufficient; an effective affirmative action policy must plan measures that will proactively improve the situation.

4. The Admissions offices should explore ways to increase recruitment efforts among minorities, especially African-Americans, and target them more precisely. Perhaps promising high schools could be targeted, and advertising campaigns might be adjusted to reach under-represented groups. Once they get to campus, students should receive increased assistance to help retain them, which might range from a greater number of advisors to sensitivity training for staff and faculty. It might be possible to create FYI communities from specific high schools.

5. The College recently proposed to CUNY a Black Male Initiative, to foster student diversity. Elements of it are being undertaken using College and University resources. The Black Male Initiative at Queens College is meant to bring together essential components of the recruitment and retention processes to increase the black male presence on campus. The project will follow recruited students from registration through their first year, monitoring academic performance and evaluating correlations between performance and participation in special programs meant to address students' specific needs. The goal is to create an environment that will attract black male students and ultimately enlist them as recruiters to expand this pool of students.

6. The College has been working to increase the number and range of course offerings given at night and on weekends, while simultaneously increasing the hours during which basic student services are available (Registrar, Bursar, Academic Support, Counseling). More should be done in this area. (See further Chapter 2, Campus Life, and Chapter 3, Retention, for details on broadening of class schedules.)

7. Students from economically limited backgrounds may be attracted and retained by greater opportunities to connect with employment opportunities, both during their school career (internships) and after (job placement programs, informal connections between faculty and businesses). The College should investigate possibilities for offering greater employment counseling and networking. Similarly, the College must invest in its technological infrastructure, whose shortages and aging equipment sometimes make students feel they are not receiving the up-to-date technical training and experience necessary for the job market.

4 Curriculum, General Education, and Related Activities

Standard 11 Educational Offerings

Standard 12 General Education

Standard 13 Related Educational Activities

4.1 Introduction: Liberal Arts Education and the College Mission

The mission of Queens College is to prepare students to become leading citizens of an increasingly global society. The primary agent for fulfilling that goal is the curriculum, which offers a rigorous education in the liberal arts and sciences under the guidance of a faculty who hold primary responsibility for its structure, evaluation, and revision. The curriculum aims to make all educational opportunities congruent with the College's mission, and our academic programs are reviewed regularly, both internally and externally, by departments themselves and by disciplinary or professional organizations. It is often said that the diversity of the College reflects the diversity of the borough of Queens. The design of our curriculum enables students to use their liberal education to understand and cope with that diversity, and to make connections where none previously existed. This structure prepares them to lead productive, satisfying lives upon graduation, as engaged and aware citizens of a complex, changing society.

Our extensive curricular offerings, including both undergraduate and graduate programs, comprise 115 majors in 47 academic departments and interdisciplinary programs, as well as 63 minors, another 63 concentrations within majors, and 166 certificate programs. Several new interdisciplinary programs have been established since our last review, to respond to the increasingly cross-disciplinary nature of academic study and student career goals. Such additional areas of study include new bachelor's and master's degrees in neuroscience, business administration, graphic design, and creative writing. Our programs aim to achieve a balance between breadth and depth, between general and specialized knowledge and skills; for all undergraduates, there are college-wide requirements in writing, mathematics, foreign languages, and general education.

Our graduate programs also range across a broad spectrum of majors, and include the widely-respected Graduate School of Library and Information Studies and the extensive teacher-training programs leading to M.S.Ed. degrees and M.A. degrees in content specialties. Our graduate programs offer focused study of specialized and advanced subjects, with an emphasis on opportunities for independent research. The graduate curriculum aims to develop advanced skills of research and critical and synthetic thinking. We also offer a variety of certificate programs for professional development and credentials (28 initial certificate programs in addition to those noted above).

Queens College is also a major participant in the consortial doctoral programs based at the CUNY Graduate School in midtown Manhattan. Members of the Queens faculty head several of those programs and some 240 Queens faculty also have appointments on the CUNY doctoral faculty. Two sub-programs in psychology are housed entirely on our campus. We are involved

in the GSUC programs at several levels. In most sciences, including chemistry, biology, physics, psychology, and earth and environmental sciences, the Queens College departments participate in the corresponding Graduate School Ph.D. programs. Some classes are taught at the GSUC and some at the college campuses, but the faculty are based at Queens and the other colleges – as are the students, although they are registered at the Graduate School. In other disciplines, the Queens College departments are full participants, with some faculty and some of the students in the Graduate School Ph.D. program based at Queens, while other faculty are based at the Graduate School rather than at the colleges. These include English, comparative literature, sociology, linguistics and communication disorders, music, European languages and literature, political science, art history, and computer science. In history, education, and anthropology, individual faculty teach at the Graduate School and some of its doctoral students teach at Queens. Finally, in several disciplines the involvement consists of individual faculty teaching at the Graduate School; these include classics, mathematics, economics, educational and community programs, philosophy, and drama, theatre, and dance.

It is a College goal to introduce our highly diverse student body to the broad ideals of a liberal arts education while keeping in mind their hopes and dreams, which are widely varying and, typically, oriented toward specific and concrete occupational goals. Thus, while we require the development of a range of basic knowledge and skills, we permit considerable choice in ways to fulfill those demands. For example, students must learn to write clearly and effectively, but they are allowed to develop their writing in the context of any subject.

The curriculum is designed, monitored, and revised to meet the evolving needs of students, and student input is sought at every level; one-third of the Academic Senate, the body that must approve all curriculum change, is composed of student representatives. All the same, those changes and needs are framed by the viewpoint of the faculty and administration rather than solely from the students' own perspective. There is at times some disjunction between the broad underlying goals of the curriculum and students' own more limited and pragmatic purposes. They want to know how each of their courses “matters” to their immediate goals, and may view wider perspectives as so many bureaucratic hurdles. It is the task of the faculty to explain the rationale behind unfamiliar requirements of breadth, depth, methods, and skills. Students should understand not only what they are being asked to learn, but why, in order to help them become more aware of the meaning and purposes of liberal arts and individual disciplines, both for the individual and for an active and informed democratic society.

We are not always as successful as we would like to be at communicating these educational and pedagogical objectives to our students, who are often the first in their families to attend college, and we need to seek more ways to do so. With the introduction of new General Education requirements in 2009 (see below), we are committed to publishing not only the skeleton of requirements but the soul of the program, the rationale and goals, to better orient students to the courses required and the outcomes expected.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

- Undergraduate College catalog and schedules of classes
- Graduate School catalog and schedules of classes
- Reports to external accrediting agencies

4.2 The Curriculum: The Heart of the College

The core undergraduate and graduate educational programs of Queens College are organized into four principal divisions: Arts and Humanities, Education, Social Sciences, and Mathematics and Natural Sciences. The majors available extend from traditional areas such as mathematics and history to the creative and performing arts, notably the Aaron Copland School of Music, and innovative programs in neuropsychology and graphic design, as well as professional degrees and certificate programs ranging from accounting to school administration. In particular, programs have striven to integrate study and the world of work, such as the International Business, Actuarial Studies, and Finance tracks within the new Bachelor of Business Administration degree and the unique program in Business and the Liberal Arts (BALA), which integrates academic pursuits with business experience.

Each major is structured to provide students with a coherent, graded sequence of courses and other learning experiences that enable majors to progressively build their knowledge, skills, and conceptual understanding. Many offer capstone courses or projects that help students synthesize the varied material they have learned, and become conversant with major theories and methodologies. These courses are also an essential mode of assessment for how well students have come to understand both the factual data and interpretative modes of the discipline (see Chapter 5, Assessment).

4.2.1 Current Programs: Content, Rigor, and Coherence

At the College, curricular coherence is achieved through a rigorous set of major and minor programs. Each is structured to provide a sequenced learning experience that leads students from general introductory material through increasingly sophisticated levels, and encourages them to synthesize learning in successively more advanced formats. In order to ensure both breadth and depth of content, courses in College majors are offered at three different levels: beginning, intermediate, and advanced. As a result of a recent CUNY-wide initiative, remedial education no longer occurs at the senior colleges, except for SEEK (opportunity) and ESL students.

Most majors require one or more introductory-level courses, to ensure that students receive a shared and comprehensive introduction to the topics and methods of the discipline. At the intermediate level, departments assure coherence in several ways: common core requirements, content-area requirements, designated tracks, or a system of prerequisites. A common core typically consists of 3-4 courses, while designated tracks give coherence to multi-purpose departments like Family, Nutrition, & Exercise Sciences and Linguistics & Communication Disorders.

All majors at the College offer advanced coursework to promote integration and synthesis of knowledge, ranging from a senior-level seminar or colloquium to independent study. Most departments also offer some form of capstone activity, such as a senior research project, thesis, practicum, or internship, though only a few require it. Offering, if not requiring, a culminating

experience in the major not only promotes coherence and the ability to think holistically; it also offers a uniquely valuable opportunity for outcomes assessment (see Chapter 5, Assessment).

In 2005 the Academic Senate, in order to address concerns about the low number of courses in the present curriculum that provide for the degree of interdisciplinarity and synthesis that characterizes a successful culminating course, established a pilot program for creating such courses, the first of which were offered in Fall 2006. The extent to which the learning goals and objectives of these pilot courses are achieved will guide the Senate in considering the extent to which such courses will become part of the requirements for the new General Education program, which will require interdisciplinary perspectives of all students (see below).

Queens College participates actively in the CUNY Honors College, an important initiative established in 2001 and currently expanding. In 2005-06, the Queens program served 200 students, placing it among the larger contingents at senior colleges. The mission of this innovative university-wide program is to attract and serve academically gifted students through a rigorous and enriched program of study, including specialized honors classes, additional advising, and provision of essential tools for advanced research and learning (e.g., individual laptop computers). Honors students are also offered small classes and special seminars focusing on specific topics. One great advantage is the school's proximity to the matchless cultural resources of New York City, which are integrated into the curriculum via seminars and performances (each student receives a free "cultural passport" to city events). The Honors College is overseen by a faculty Director, who is guided by an Advisory Committee of faculty drawn from all divisions.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

Reports on the Honors College

4.2.2 Program Review and Assessment

All departments and programs are subject to a regular five-to-seven-year cycle of academic review. Program reviews collect information about courses, faculty, and students; use that information to identify problems and solutions; and plan for the future. Outside evaluators from the field assist in this self-study process, ensuring that departments fulfill professional standards as well as the College's mission. Some programs are also evaluated and accredited by independent groups such as the American Chemical Society, the American Dietetics Association, and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. The Honors College is continually observed, assessed, and modified to assure that it is meeting program goals and student needs; program review is performed annually, at the College level and by the central office of CUNY. (For assessment procedures, see Chapter 5, Assessment.)

The rigor and consistency of the curriculum are largely and effectively maintained by individual faculty members, subject to periodic peer observation and review by senior faculty, department chairs, and the administration. Instructors are, for example, required to submit the syllabus of each course taught to the department. The quality and commitment of the College faculty underwrite and guarantee the quality of their programs. Our faculty, famously declared "world-class" by the London Times, consistently engage in research, writing, and other forms of scholarly and professional activity that place them in the forefront of their disciplines.

Consequently, the courses they offer tend to be up-to-date and intellectually rigorous. Beyond large introductory courses, most classes in a major assign substantial reading as well as significant research and writing.

Given this significant faculty responsibility, it is of some concern to the permanent faculty that the percentage of courses being taught by full-time instructors has fallen considerably since the last Periodic Review Report, from 61% in 2001-2 to 45% in 2005-6. The College demands high qualifications from its adjuncts, reinforced by mandated classroom observations and evaluations. Nevertheless, in order to function effectively at the level expected of Queens faculty, these part-time and often transient employees still require considerable training and oversight, which fall to the individual departments. Most offer some introduction to department and college policies, and larger programs assign full-time faculty to supervise adjuncts and assure uniformity across multiple sections of courses. A new faculty handbook has been developed; it includes much information valuable to all faculty, and sections are specifically geared to adjuncts. The College is currently exploring institution-wide methods of further integrating temporary instructors: in Spring 2006 for the first time an orientation session was offered to all such faculty.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

Academic Program Review for each department

4.2.3 Curricular Change: An Ongoing Process

The College curriculum is continually evaluated and updated, starting with the curriculum committee within each department and the periodic review and self-assessment that departments undertake of their overall programs. It is our goal to assure that individual courses and programs of study meet the needs of students. The College's Academic Senate has control over all matters of undergraduate and graduate curriculum at the College (subject to administrative approval), including new programs, changes to programs, new courses, and changes to courses. Proposals are normally initiated by the department concerned, through its curriculum committee, which then presents its proposal for consideration by the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (UCC) or Graduate Curriculum Committee of the Academic Senate. Changes to general education requirements and graduation requirements are also under the purview of these committees. Once items have been passed by the Senate, they are forwarded to the University's Board of Trustees (via its Committee on Academic Program Planning and Research) for final approval.

Under the leadership of the UCC, a number of major changes to the curriculum have been instituted over the last five years. Seven departments and interdisciplinary programs have significantly altered the requirements and/or course offerings of their majors, from Computer Science to Art (studio), European Languages & Literatures, and Linguistics & Communications Disorders. Wholly new and innovative programs were established in business administration, graphic design, and neuroscience, and several departments added new subspecialty tracks. The Honors Program for encouraging more intensive and advanced work has been significantly expanded and broadened, and now includes a special Freshman Honors Program and an Honors Program in Social Sciences. In order to consolidate related programs and intensify study of an area greatly relevant to many College students, Puerto Rican Studies merged with Latin American and Latino Studies.

4.3 General Education

A crucial component of the College's mission is to provide students with a broad liberal arts education, which forms the framework for their individualized paths of study, the shared basis for communication among students with different interests and backgrounds, and the context necessary for understanding and functioning in the world at large. The primary means for assuring that all College graduates are exposed to the breadth inherent in a liberal education, and to the contrasts and interrelations between disciplines and forms of knowledge, is the required program of general education. At present, this central pillar of the curricular structure calls for all undergraduates to complete approximately 27-31 credits of coursework, or one-quarter of the total credits toward the bachelor's degree, distributed across the major areas of knowledge and intellectual inquiry. The specific form of this system has recently been fundamentally restructured in response to changes over time in both the program itself and the forms of knowledge deemed essential. We believe we have developed a system that ensures that students meet specific competency goals in subject areas and in their ability to research, analyze, and write with ease and effectiveness.

4.3.1 Change and its Motivations

The college recently completed an extensive review of its longstanding system of general education requirements, called LASAR (Liberal Arts and Sciences Area Requirements), which has been in place since Fall 1981. One major and immediate impetus for revision of the college program was the CUNY Master Plan for 2000-2004, which set higher expectations for all university students in areas directly related to the mandate of LASAR. Competencies in analytic writing, reading, and quantitative analysis are now evaluated by the CUNY Proficiency Exam (CPE), which students must pass in order to advance to upper division work. The UCC had been studying the issue for several years and issued two interim Reports (2002, 2005), which formed the basis for the fundamental reorganization.

The LASAR system came under increasing criticism in the 1990s, for a variety of reasons. While originally designed to define necessary areas of basic knowledge, the system had only vague and general definitions of its requirements or the rationale behind them, and the number of courses approved for LASAR credit had proliferated to the point where student choices were virtually open and random. Also, because of the vagueness of the goals of required areas of study, the faculty was concerned that students did not understand the objectives of the courses, and the extent to which objectives were being met was difficult to assess.

In 2003 President Muyskens appointed a General Education Task Force with broad college-wide representation, charging it to reflect on the direction general education should take. Pursuant to the Task Force report, submitted in 2004, the UCC solicited input from a broad spectrum of campus constituencies to create a proposal for a practicable new system. The Academic Senate voted in Spring 2006 to institute the heart of the system, which will guarantee that graduating students have basic familiarity with goals, concepts, methods, and general knowledge of the major disciplines and areas of study. This system will take effect in Fall 2009. The goals of the new requirements will be published in the College Bulletin, to help increase student and faculty awareness. Consideration of the purposes of liberal education will form an integral part of course content. Until the implementation date, courses will be piloted and assessed, to determine how well program goals will be met, in an ongoing cycle of development and review.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

General Education Task Force Report (2004)

4.3.2 The System under Construction

The new general education curriculum -- parts of which have been approved while others are still being refined for votes in the near future -- is structured to provide students with basic competency in the crucial areas of general knowledge, methods of inquiry, and skills of independent research. If completed as now contemplated, the plan calls for three tiers of course requirements and encourages departments to design innovative courses to fit them. Courses designated for general education credit will emphasize the questions and methodologies of their discipline; the relation of that field to other disciplines and larger social, cultural, and ethical questions; and a comparative or global perspective, and will engage students in active inquiry using primary materials and documents. Such courses teach more than the facts and skills of one segment of knowledge: they also teach why that knowledge matters, how it is derived and verified, and how it may be used and misused. Complete characteristics of the new system and its various requirements are available in the supporting documents.

It is expected that the UCC will be the implementing and coordinating body, perhaps through a standing subcommittee on general education that will foster, approve, and periodically review curriculum innovation. The UCC or its delegate will constitute the institutional mechanism for assessing the effectiveness of the program and recommending changes as needed.

The three tiers of requirements are: Basic Competencies; Areas of Knowledge and Inquiry; and Integration and Synthesis. At the time of writing, Areas of Knowledge has been fully approved and Integration is being piloted.

The category of Areas of Knowledge and Inquiry provides breadth of knowledge through eight courses across the arts and humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. Within this category, some courses must address varying Contexts of Experience, to expose students to the social, political, and intellectual-historical contexts of knowledge at the concentric levels of our own nation, European traditions, and the world. A group of Extended Requirements provides for knowledge of Pre-Industrial Society and Abstract or Quantitative Reasoning. Because some courses may fulfill more than one of these sub-requirements, students will normally satisfy this entire component of general education with 25-28 credits of coursework.

An innovative aspect of this system is the establishment of a series of courses under the rubric of Perspectives on the Liberal Arts and Sciences (PLAS). These courses will provide an explicitly philosophical and methodological focus on the goals, questions, foundations, and debates within each discipline. These courses may fulfill any of the above area requirements; students will probably be expected to take at least four within their total of general education courses. Pilot PLAS courses will be offered in the 2006-2007 academic year and assessed to determine how well the goals for such courses are being met. Further course and faculty development will proceed with the new Center for Teaching and Learning as courses are modified in the light of learning outcomes measured in the pilots.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

Undergraduate Bulletin

Undergraduate Curriculum Committee reports, 2002, 2005

General Education recommendations passed by Academic Senate, 2006,
for introduction in 2009, and proposals still in progress

4.3.3 Further Requirements: Content and Skills

While the new system will provide a more rational and effective method of assuring sufficient general background and competency in a variety of essential fields, the new area requirements do not cover some basic undergraduate competencies, notably mathematics, foreign languages, writing skills, and information literacy. While policies and programs already exist, they may not be serving student needs optimally. In an increasingly online world, all our students need more practice in research and writing. Discussions of the appropriate methods to focus curricular attention on these subject and skill areas are substantially under way within the UCC and the Academic Senate. Considerable consensus has begun to emerge about altering current requirements in these categories, but at this writing proposals are being further refined, for consideration by the Senate in Spring 2007. The encouragement of undergraduate participation in research is also under discussion; such participation occurs in some science and social science majors, but most students do not have the opportunity to be involved in knowledge-creating research.

1. Writing: WAC

One essential competency, skill in writing, is currently under review. The College is committed to the goal of ensuring that all students are able to analyze and synthesize ideas in written form and express their own thoughts clearly. Therefore it has operated a program since 1997, Writing across the Curriculum (WAC), to stimulate and support a culture of writing on campus. In addition to organizing workshops and conferences on writing for both students and faculty, the program supervises and benefits from the services of advanced CUNY graduate students who serve as Writing Fellows. The efficacy of this program is currently being assessed, through sampling, rubrics, and faculty workshops. Courses in a broad range of departments are designated “W” for “Writing Intensive,” and each student must take at least 3 W courses. To qualify for the W designation, a course must involve a significant writing component, and the instructor is required to devote in-class time to teaching students how to approach the assignments, and to discuss student writing both before and after each assignment. Class size is limited to 30. From 2002-3 to 2004-5, total annual enrollment in W courses rose 35%, from 6935 to 9369.

W courses exist in all divisions of the college, but almost two-thirds of enrollments are in the Arts and Humanities division. Prior to 2002, the English Department accounted for 66% of W enrollments, but that number has declined to about 38% as W courses have propagated among academic departments, as was the goal of the program. A few introductory courses, such as English 120 and ACE 3, which for a transitional period received 2 W credits, now receive only one W, as assessment showed that other departments have made effective progress in developing new W courses.

It is desirable for students to take their three W courses at progressive levels of skill (introductory, intermediate, and advanced), and preferable to take at least two of those in their major. However, the current number and subject distribution of W courses do not yet permit such an integrated sequence for all students.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

Periodic Program Reports, WAC
Goals for Student Writing at Queens College
Reading the Undergraduate Writing Culture Eight Years into WI:
A Descriptive Assessment
Reports on W courses across the college

2. Information Literacy

It is increasingly essential for students and citizens in the contemporary information-age world to be knowledgeable about how to navigate the mushrooming sources of intellectual information, both traditional/print and electronic/online. Information literacy can be defined as the ability to locate, evaluate and use information effectively. According to the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) standards, "Information literacy forms the basis for lifelong learning. It is common to all disciplines, to all learning environments, and to all levels of education. It enables learners to master content and extend their investigations, become more self-directed, and assume greater control over their own learning." Our goal is to introduce all students to the basic concepts and values of information technology, and the intellectual tools for using it effectively and appropriately. Students must come to understand how to locate and access information; how to evaluate its reliability, objectivity, and usefulness; and how to observe the regulations and policies concerning the use of intellectual property. As part of making that learning experience possible, the College is ranked nationally for its wireless capabilities and on-line resources are used extensively across the curriculum. We are doing a good job at present, but are aware that much more could and must still be accomplished, as continual technological change makes this imperative more urgent.

At present information literacy is developed through the required Freshman Composition course (English 110) and individual research-oriented courses in most departments. The Library's formal connection to the teaching of information literacy is in two areas: (1) English 110 classes receive about five hours of information literacy basics from a Library faculty member, and (2) the Library itself runs two courses, LIBR 100, "Information Literacy," and LIBR 150, "Fundamentals of Library Research." Recently, about seven sections of LIBR 100, with a total enrollment of about 150 students, have been offered each semester. LIBR 150 has not been offered for several years. The Library faculty is currently redesigning that course to create special sections tailored to the needs and resources of each of the four College divisions; we anticipate offering pilot classes in Fall 2007.

This approach has unfortunately not guaranteed that all students obtain the degree of literacy required in today's world. Building information skills is not just a Library function; it can and should take place in subject courses with appropriate skill-building assignments and pedagogies. Ideally, library and teaching faculty would work collaboratively to develop skills relevant to their specific curriculums. Library staff and committees reveal both enthusiasm for working with

faculty to promote information literacy and frustration in finding ways to forge such relationships, given the time constraints of teaching. As a result, the formal exposure of students to information principles is not ideal. While there are inspiring examples of teachers guiding students to perform complex research, this function is currently left to individual faculty discretion rather than formally codified across the curriculum.

A proposal to better address this problem is now being formulated by the UCC, which considers "research" a skill that should be part of the general education requirements. Information literacy could form part of a formal research requirement in several ways, including (1) continuing the practice of including it in ENGL 110 early in students' careers; (2) including it in all majors for which it is practical (allowing focused research in the student's area of study); and (3) making it part of the senior-level integration and synthesis courses that will be part of the general education structure.

4.4 Related Educational Activities

If there is one generalization that can be made about Queens College students, it is that they do not fit easily into any simple generalizations about their age, social and economic background, previous preparation, or educational objectives. We remain committed to serving the entire community, and to accommodating distinctive needs to the highest degree feasible. Our students also benefit from the wide array of extracurricular academic and cultural activities hosted by the campus, from art exhibitions to student performances and noted outside speakers; this busy programming has established the College as a popular cultural center for residents of Queens (see Chapter 2, Campus Life).

The College offers a comprehensive range of educational activities and programs, both credit-bearing and non-credit, which are specially tailored to significant local constituencies and their needs, whether social, economic, linguistic, or occupational. Instructors for these courses are full-time faculty or adjuncts selected by the relevant departments with the same rigorous criteria as for traditional undergraduate courses.

Following is an outline of the principal co-curricular programs; for supporting documents, see Roadmap, Standard 13.

4.4.1 Programs for Students with Special Needs

Identifiable groups whose needs and life situations the college acknowledges and serves include:

- The large percentage of our student body who are speakers of English as a second language, either officially CUNY-designated or as determined from writing samples. Assistance, including immersion programs, workshops and tutoring, is provided through the College English as a Second Language program.
- Students from economically or socially disadvantaged backgrounds who require supplemental academic and social support may be admitted to the SEEK program.
- Students whose pursuit of education must, for reasons of employment or other outside responsibilities, occur at times and places outside the usual undergraduate weekday schedule are provided for through the Adult College Education (ACE) program, an adult re-entry program, and Weekend College, which enables students to complete most general education requirements, and at least three complete majors, entirely on the weekend.

4.4.2 The Global Campus: Study Abroad

The College recognizes that in an increasingly globalized world, all local communities are inextricably linked to their national and international context. With the goal of developing student awareness of global issues and world cultures, the College has long participated in the education abroad and international exchange programs offered by CUNY and institutions outside the CUNY system.

Last year Queens retained a full-time Education Abroad Director to aggressively expand our own network of education abroad partnerships. These partnerships include the University Study Abroad Consortium, which offers programs in 23 countries, and the National Student Exchange, which enables our students to access education abroad programs throughout a network of 173 colleges and universities including the SUNY schools. In the last twelve months Queens College has designed and implemented fourteen new short-term (one month) programs in Egypt, Australia, Japan, Spain, Italy, Greece, and the United Kingdom. When students come to the Study Abroad office and ask “Where do we have programs?” the answer is now “Where do you want to go?” because we can place students in any country through our partnerships and networks.

4.4.3 Lifelong Learning: Non-Credit Programs

Mindful that while formal schooling may end, learning never does, the College operates extensive programs of non-credit education for adults through its Continuing Education Program (CEP). This includes both ESL and the English Language Institute for the many residents of Queens for whom English is not their first language, as well as general non-credit courses and the College for Older Adults. In addition, many area residents enthusiastically audit regular college courses for a nominal fee as part of a state-wide program for senior citizens.

4.4.4 Liaison and Articulation with Area Schools

Equally mindful that college education must rest on solid preparation in high school, the College actively promotes the readiness of New York City secondary-school students. Townsend Harris High School, one of the city’s premier competitive schools, is located on the Queens College campus: our faculty members teach there and sufficiently prepared students can take classes at the College. Also on campus, PS 499, the Queens School for Math, Science, and Technology, a laboratory K-6 school, also benefits from significant College involvement. For example, Music Education and FNES students make presentations to PS 499 students, Education faculty perform research at the school, many QC students student teach there, and an innovative student teaching approach is being developed in a joint program.

In Fall 2005, the Queens School of Inquiry, an early-college high school, opened on Parsons Boulevard, one mile from campus. Its students, the first of whom have now begun Grade 7, make frequent visits to campus. Faculty and students at the College, particularly in Education and Science departments, are heavily involved with the school, participating in curriculum development and teaching pedagogies.

Our College Now program works with city high schools to strengthen pre-college student preparedness and facilitate transition to more advanced study. Student activities offered include numerous college-credit courses, as well as a few high school courses, pre-college workshops

during the school year, and summer activities, such as the Summer Science program, which brings many area high school students on campus for an intense two-week exposure to science. Eligible high school juniors and seniors enroll in college credit courses in the humanities, social sciences, mathematics and the natural sciences. High school freshmen, sophomores and juniors and a few seniors participate in pre-college academic enrichment workshops aimed at preparation for college-level work and high-stakes Regents examinations in U.S. History & Government, English Language Arts, and Math A and B. In the summer, entering tenth–twelfth graders participate in a 10-day no-credit science camp. The program also provides professional development for high school social studies, English and ESL teachers.

4.4.5 Centers and Institutes

The college supports a broad range of academic Centers and Institutes dedicated to themes and groups that are of special interest to the College and to our surrounding communities. They cover the spectrum of fields in humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and education, from the Calandra Italian American Institute and the Jewish Studies Center to such new initiatives as the Neuroscience Center and the Entrepreneurship Center for study and facilitating of business development, particularly in our urban and minority context. Each of these creates bridges between scholars, teachers, and the wider community through a mix of conferences and workshops, public lectures, publications, and sponsorship of special course offerings. They provide students with a wide variety of co-curricular educational experiences on topics of current concern or historical importance, including the opportunity to work with faculty on research.

4.5 Summary and Recommendations

The College is home to a broad array of educational programs, both credit and non-credit, which are designed to serve the multiple and shifting needs of a complex, diverse, and often struggling constituency. Our successful and popular curricular programs are all continually monitored and evaluated, and modified or redesigned as appropriate, in an ongoing effort to assure relevance and coherence. New programs are added whenever it becomes clear that there is a segment of our local community that is underserved.

Up to and during the start-up phase of the new general education system, from 2009-12, our curricular bodies will be heavily occupied with overseeing and assessing implementation of the new program. Alongside that responsibility, there remain, in addition to suggested areas of improvement discussed above, several aspects of the educational experience that could be improved by new initiatives, which should be given serious consideration.

A. Additional Majors

The expanding field of health professions could be better served. Many students enter with the dream of attending medical school, but not all of them can achieve this demanding goal. Students with a serious commitment to health sciences, as well as the general public welfare, might be better served if we instituted a wider array of options within the field, from pharmacy to public health or physical therapy.

B. Information Literacy

As noted above, the UCC and the Academic Senate are well aware that the College's current patchwork system does not insure adequate training in this essential skill for all students, and are

in the process of formulating improvements. It is anticipated that the plan for advanced information literacy now under consideration will build the development of these skills into the course sequences for departmental majors. As with all components of the revamped general education structure, it is essential to build in from the outset systematic mechanisms for evaluating the success of new initiatives.

C. Writing across the Curriculum

1. Although there has been progress toward encouraging all departments to offer W courses, there are some, particularly outside the humanities, which do not offer enough to serve their majors. The College needs to consider what can be done to encourage more departments and programs to join in this effort and assure continued expansion, working toward the goal of enabling all students to fulfill this requirement at least partially within their major.
2. A second problem is that there is at present no formal mechanism for immediately assessing the writing skills of incoming transfer students, who may not be properly prepared for college level writing. Possible solutions to this problem are currently under discussion in the UCC, including a requirement that all students take a Writing Intensive course at or before 60 credits, the maximum number of credits which a student may transfer to the College (see Chapter 1, Facilitating Transfer and Retaining Students).
3. It is necessary to design and implement more consistent assessment of the outcomes of our required writing courses. Recent interim reports from the WAC coordinators are only a beginning; we must institutionalize ways to measure the success of our current and future courses and make appropriate alterations.

D. The Center for Teaching and Learning and General Education

As discussed above, the new Center for Teaching and Learning will be the focal point of the effort to develop the new general education curriculum, and it will be important that the College devote sufficient resources to it and to the other faculty development programs adjacent to it, Writing across the Curriculum and the Faculty Development Laboratory.

E. Student Support in Gateway Courses

Many students experience particular difficulty in certain “gateway” courses, which can form a barrier to their academic success. The College has recognized this problem by providing tutoring in certain science and mathematics courses. The Academic Support Center should continue to expand its progress in offering more course-specific tutoring and other services, working in conjunction with the Advising Center to increase student awareness of the assistance that is available to them.

F. Doctoral Science Reorganization

The reorganization of the CUNY doctoral science programs now being developed and considered may have major implications for the college’s undergraduate and graduate science programs and must be monitored with care.

5 Assessment

Standard 7: Institutional Assessment

Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning

5.1 Introduction and Background

Student learning is central to the college's mission as an educational institution. We are accountable and must demonstrate, summatively, to our stakeholders that our students meet the learning goals we set for them. Formatively, we assess student learning and identify both best practices and areas that need improvement. Assessment has been a priority in College planning since the 1996 Self-Study Report identified this process as central to the College's educational activities. The sense of urgency was reinforced in 2001 by a report from the Outcomes Assessment Committee, which noted progress in fulfilling the recommendations of the Self-Study, but also added numerous suggestions to flesh out and update the earlier mandate.

The College has made considerable effort, particularly in the last five years, to implement and build on these ideas. As a result of this concentrated attention, campus awareness of the importance of monitoring educational results has risen greatly, and a culture of systematic assessment has taken root. All the same, the promise of an educational environment in which systematic evaluation of all aspects of the College is the norm, and evaluation would result in continuous improvement, still remains to be solidified. Although assessment is crucial to many aspects of College operations, from administration to physical plant, this report focuses on the most important of assessment activities: the College's efforts to evaluate and improve student learning.

5.1.1 Assessment Is Integral to Fulfillment of the College Mission

The program of outcomes assessment is grounded in the College's mission, and the College has made significant advances and enhancements in assessment activities and feedback mechanisms that help to accomplish our stated goals. The mission of Queens College is to prepare students to become leading citizens of an increasingly global society. The College seeks to do this by offering its exceptionally diverse student body a rigorous education in the liberal arts and sciences, via a structured curriculum in which students learn the underlying principles of the humanities, the arts, and the mathematical, natural, and social sciences. The cognitive goals of that education are that students learn to think critically, address complex problems, explore various cultures, and use effectively the full array of available technologies and information resources.

Outcomes assessment is integral to this mission because "the ultimate goal of outcomes assessment is the improvement of teaching and learning," our core function (Middle States Association, Standard 14). The College integrates into its complete range of academic and institutional planning a complex and ongoing process of self-examination and self-evaluation. This process begins with the faculty, who are charged with the responsibility of setting educational objectives and evaluating individual student performance. The process asks: What should students learn? How well are they learning it? How do we know? How can the information gained from this research improve teaching and learning? Only by answering such

questions can we promote those College activities that meet or exceed expectations, and/or fix whatever may fall short of expectations.

5.1.2 The Last Ten Years: The 1996 Self-Study Report and its Aftermath

As part of the 1996 Self-Study review, a task force was charged with describing and analyzing procedures used by the College for evaluating educational effectiveness. That group also made recommendations about the assignment of responsibility for this evaluation and documented a need for additional procedures for collecting outcomes information. The 1996 report made recommendations in six areas, three of which are central to any process of assessing outcomes for students:

- The quality of the student academic experiences during college, that is, the extent to which students have mastered the knowledge, skills and abilities that are incorporated in the mission statement
- Ethical and personal development during college, that is, the extent to which students have an understanding of themselves, other individuals and their environment and participate in activities related to those concerns
- Students after college, that is, the extent to which graduates have been prepared to perform as intelligent citizens after they leave the institution.

A standing Outcomes Assessment Committee was appointed in 2001 to increase awareness of these issues and efforts to incorporate them into College operations. In that year the committee issued a report on their investigations into how much progress had been made in implementing the recommendations of the 1996 report and whether those recommendations needed to be modified or updated. That report noted that there had been challenges to meeting the goals of the self-study and that progress had been real but not yet fully adequate, and further presented a list of recommendations of its own. Since that salutary reminder, considerably greater progress has been made in this area.

In addition to crediting the faculty members who have created and operated the new systems, it is important to note that increased success is due to three crucial factors. During the time period covering these two rounds of self-study, the College has undergone rapid and significant transitions in its administration, technology, and university-wide infrastructure, which have contributed significantly to improvements in assessment.

- Changes in administration: Over the past ten years, the college has experienced two presidents and one acting president, three provosts, and multiple deans in every division, all of whom have increasingly emphasized outcomes assessment. Equally important, each successive executive has increased the resources and support provided to assessment across campus.
- The explosion in information technology available to the College to engage in, and document, assessment efforts: Many early initiatives have been replaced by newer, better, and less expensive approaches, techniques and documentation formats. In turn, as the institution has experimented with these rapidly evolving tools, the resources have inspired yet further questions about ways to use outcomes assessment to accomplish the institutional mission.
- The CUNY central administration has significantly increased system-wide support for assessment. For example, CUNY has instituted university-wide competency testing, through the CUNY Proficiency Examination (CPE), discussed further below. The central office also collects

and publishes considerable data on various aspects of student educational experience and achievement, permitting cross-campus comparison.

5.1.3 Desired Outcomes: What We Try to Measure

The first task of the process of assessing student learning is to establish what skills, competencies, and knowledge students are expected to develop or acquire in their educational career: in other words, what are the desirable outcomes we try to measure?

Based on the College mission, we focus assessment on four areas: the quality of academic programs, students’ ethical and personal development, the adequacy of occupational preparation, and the quality of campus life (see Chapter 3, Campus Life). More specifically, although there is considerable variation in the skills or standards deemed most important within the different academic disciplines, the College identifies four broad categories of intellectual competencies: applied research and analytic skills, such as the ability to develop problem-solving strategies; critical thinking skills; basic and applied academic skills, including effective written and oral communication; and artistic skills. Table 1 presents these categories with examples of each.

In addition, several broad educational attainments have been articulated as fundamental outcomes of the College’s general education requirements, including technological competence (especially library and other information resources); familiarity with the basic concerns and methods of the major areas of knowledge, from arts and humanities to social science, natural science, and mathematics and quantitative analysis; and a range of attitudes associated with human values and responsible judgment (on these see further Chapter 4, Curriculum and General Education).

Table 1: Expected Outcomes: Major Competencies or Standards of Academic Disciplines

Category	Examples
Applied Research and Analytic Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to do research • Critical evaluation of empirical research results • Ability to design well-constructed experiments to address research questions • Develop solutions to programming problems
Critical Thinking Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to do critical thinking • Logical reasoning • Recognition of patterns • Accurate symbolic manipulation
Basic and Applied Academic Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written and oral communication skills • Language proficiency • High level of competence in English language arts • Content knowledge
Artistic Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To analyze a play • To become active in the creative process • To become part of an artistic team sharing a goal • To discover one’s uniqueness as an artist

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

5.1.4 Available Sources of Data

The second essential task of assessment is identifying existing and potential sources of summative data on student achievement on which to base educational evaluations. In this we are blessed with a wide variety of sources that are available at several institutional levels. The individual departments and programs accumulate much evidence, while agencies of the College administration and of the central University offices collect and analyze such information on a wider basis. In particular, the College's Office of Institutional Research (OIR) assembles and tabulates much relevant information, both on its own and in response to specific requests.

Alongside such ongoing efforts, for the purposes of the present Self-Study, a detailed survey was distributed to all department chairs and program directors on campus, designed to elicit both factual information about current assessment practices and more open-ended commentary on issues and plans. This instrument was extremely helpful in eliciting constructive commentary on all phases and aspects of the process, and might constitute a useful periodic form of investigation (see below, Recommendations).

Beyond the College, we draw upon the criteria, data, and analysis gathered and promoted by external agencies, such as national professional societies and other accreditation agencies. Eighty-seven percent of department chairs who responded to the self-study survey indicated that their disciplines are connected with professional associations, which identify important student learning outcomes or competencies that provide a context in which to ground assessment. The Chemistry department, for example, recently changed its major requirements to meet standards for an American Chemical Society-Certified Degree.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

National Survey of Student Engagement 2005 Means Comparison Report
(2006 Assessment Task Force report, Appendix III)

5.1.5 From Summative to Formative

In response to the 1996 Self-Study, a permanent Outcomes Assessment Committee was established, which issued an interim report in 2001 to chart progress halfway through the accreditation period and to make further recommendations, some of which have since been adopted. Beyond numerous practical suggestions (see below), the committee found that, in more conceptual terms, outcomes evaluation efforts to date had been primarily summative rather than formative. While the committee recommended continuing to strengthen that existing focus, it called upon the College to simultaneously introduce an ongoing formative assessment process designed to transform Queens College into a fully "self-evaluating organization." By urging creation of what Middle States Association standards refer to as a "teaching/learning/assessment/improvement loop," the committee set the College on the track toward improvement-oriented (formative) assessment as opposed to merely accountability-oriented (summative) assessment. The efforts outlined below continue to aim toward this fully integrated approach to self-evaluation.

In particular, the College has attempted to allay concerns among the faculty that added assessment components are intended merely to demand accountability to various external standards, rather than aiming at broader pedagogical goals. It remains essential to convince faculty that they have some stake in, and some potential benefit from, the assessment process, because, as the campus constituency most directly involved in the learning process, the faculty bring the most relevant experience and the keenest professional expertise to this task.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

Report of Assessment Task Force, May 2006

Report of Outcomes Assessment Committee, 2001

5.2 Assessment of Learning: Structure, Methods, Feedback, and Revision

Across the campus, assessment activities are widespread and generate a growing quantity and quality of information, which is then analyzed for conclusions about relative success that can be utilized to modify programs and raise their success rates with students. As these sources of information and forms of analysis have multiplied, the College has established new modes of administrative and faculty oversight for this sprawling and complex activity, carrying out recommendations from the 1996 Self-Study Report. Responsibility for coordinating, implementing, and promoting the College's assessment efforts is assigned to the Associate Provost, who also chairs the standing college-wide Outcomes Assessment Committee, which includes the Director of Institutional Research and several faculty members.

Evidence for analysis is derived from a broad range of activities and sources, beginning at the level of the individual departments, where current assessment is concentrated. Beyond that level, there are additional arms of the College that generate useful data, and we also benefit from CUNY-wide testing, data collection, and surveys that allow us to compare to other schools in the system. Finally, there are national tests and surveys that are administered at Queens (or CUNY-wide), which provide benchmarks for comparing our performance to schools across the country.

5.2.1 Current Assessment Goals, Programs, and Instruments: the Department Level

1. Assessing Student Learning Outcomes

A comprehensive range of student learning outcomes are currently being assessed within individual departments and programs. Approximately 81% of departments indicate that they assess cumulative learning of students, 69% assess analytical and information skills, 50% assess growth and improvement, and 75% assess specific competencies. The knowledge and cognitive abilities of students are assessed by 69% of the departments, student attitude development by 31%, and physical skills and techniques by 19%.

2. Tools and Measures of Student Outcomes

A wide variety of outcomes assessment measures are currently used to evaluate the effectiveness of our programs. Externally, many departments periodically undergo program evaluation by professional authorities, and the College regularly surveys current students and alumni. Internal assessment tools range from nationally standardized tests to local comprehensive exams, student

self-report measures, portfolio assessment, and capstone or thesis/research projects. A number of departments have developed some form of proficiency exam: the Music School tests its majors three times -- as freshman, sophomores, and graduating seniors -- while the Psychology Department has developed a quantitative instrument for assessing learning outcomes in two basic courses required of majors, and the Japanese program encourages students to take the Japanese Proficiency Exam. A capstone course or other culminating experience, in addition to promoting curricular coherence, can make outcomes assessment more feasible: the History Department, for example, examines papers produced in its required senior colloquium, and the English Department intends to use its required senior seminar to assess outcomes.

The most popular and common strategy remains course-embedded assessments (94% of departments), consistent with the MSA mandate that “assessment must be meaningfully integrated into ongoing activities and not perceived as an extra burden.” Among the most frequent course-embedded approaches are written tests, papers, field observations, and small-group projects. Course writing projects and examinations remain the most frequent means of assessment in the major, although disciplines with distinctive skill sets use other suitable methods: the creative and performing arts departments emphasize performances or exhibitions, others evaluate internships, and some sciences emphasize participation in faculty-led research projects.

Assessment strategies that are particularly effective and popular can be grouped into four broad categories: programmatic assessment strategies (preferred by 28% of responding departments), strategies related to students’ abilities to synthesize and apply knowledge (41%), strategies related to satisfaction (21%), and norm-referenced strategies (10%). Table 2 presents these categories with examples of each.

Table 2: Assessment Strategies that are Working Particularly Well

Category	Examples
Programmatic Assessment Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of syllabi and course requirements • Relating student performance in advanced courses to previous courses taken • Timely discussion of curriculum issues among concerned faculty • Faculty focus groups
Synthesizing and Applying Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portfolio assessment • Case studies • Curriculum units • Projects that reinforce classroom material but also encourage creative thinking
Satisfaction Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written surveys given to recent alumni and graduating seniors • Student satisfaction questionnaires • Exit interviews • Focus groups with employers
Norm-Referenced Assessment Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple choice exams in required courses • Proficiency and placement exams • Standardized exams

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

2006 Assessment Task Force Report, Figures 3, 4, 6, 7, 10

5.2.2 Sources of Data beyond the Department Level

The College and University are very interested in the nature and quality of student experiences, and both have developed and implemented numerous broad-based assessment methods to obtain a better understanding of the impact of initiatives on overall success rates and student opinions of them. Student experience encompasses a long process that progresses from admission through enrollment, retention, graduation, and alumni life. At each stage, the institution assesses whether past, current, and contemplated actions contribute to accomplishment of our institutional mission. The College and CUNY Central review these assessments to determine what changes, if any, to undertake (see further on this Chapter 1, Facilitating Transfer and Retaining Students).

1. Other Resources within CUNY

a. The CUNY Proficiency Exam (CPE) mentioned above provides a measure of selected academic areas and skills. A rising-junior exam which tests students' ability to write, present and support reasoning, and analyze numerical data, the CPE is now required for students to advance to upper-level work. Minimal proficiency for a college junior is the benchmark for a passing grade. The College administration and the faculty review the CPE assessments extensively to derive feedback on overall performance. It provides ongoing assessment of student achievement in the first few years, inspiring and enabling significant assessment activity within the College. As a comprehensive and comparative assessment mechanism, it has proven helpful as departments evaluate their programs. The College provides data on performance of students by major field and department to assist in this evaluation.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

CUNY Proficiency Exam, Queens College Report
(2006 Assessment Task Force Report, Appendix III.4)

b. Outcomes can also be measured in terms of student satisfaction and success after graduation. While not a direct measure of student learning, such information can be helpful to the College and departments in assessing the appropriateness of their programs. The Office of Institutional Research distributes an annual graduation survey, which provides information on the future plans of graduating students. To measure suitability of the College's programs, alumni five years after graduation are studied using a survey instrument, developed by a faculty/staff committee, which asks graduates how well they feel their course of study prepared them for employment, and how successful they have been at pursuing their goals. The 2006 survey, still in progress, shows, for example, that over one-third of graduates earned advanced degrees, primarily in education. The College Alumni Office maintains a database on some 72,000 alumni that is updated regularly and checked by outside services, through which employment information for a large share of alumni could be obtained. This information has not been used for assessment, but the potential exists. Of course, this would provide primarily summative program information. Similar efforts are periodically undertaken at the university-wide level by the CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Analysis.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

Queens College Annual Alumni Survey form, 2006
Queens College Annual Alumni Survey; results 2000 – 2005
Five-year-out survey and preliminary results 2006

c. Additional indirect measures of student achievement can be found in the CUNY-wide statistics on rates of student retention, graduation, and degrees conferred. These are gathered annually at each college and combined into a unified University report, which allows the College to see how its own rates of student retention and graduation are changing, and how they compare with other schools. (See Chapter 1, Facilitating Transfer and Retaining Students.)

2. Outside CUNY

a. In addition to statistics gathered within our own University, the College participates in several other important wider assessments, including the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), which inquires about the ongoing classroom environment. In 2000 and 2005, all CUNY senior colleges took part in the NSSE, making Queens one of 276 schools for which we have data on the experiences of a representative sample of freshmen and seniors. Outcomes at Queens can be compared with other individual schools, or against the benchmark of peer-group averages, to gain further insight into trends in enrollment and student involvement (see Chapter 1, Facilitating Transfer and Retaining Students).

b. The College participates in the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) produces a report based on data that it collects from colleges that NCES identifies as peer institutions to Queens. Although some of the institutions selected do not seem truly comparable to Queens, this survey nonetheless provides useful guidance for actions to improve student experience.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

2006 Assessment Committee Report, Appendix III.3

c. Finally, there are professional certification examinations that help us to assess student learning. Every year, the Accounting Department reviews the results of the CPA exam, comparing the achievement of its majors to students from other CUNY campuses and nationwide. At least 25% of College students are involved in teacher preparation programs, and in 2003-04 589 of them took the Assessment of Teaching Skills written exam; 99% of them passed. That same year, 580 students took the Liberal Arts and Sciences Test (pass rate 97%) and 210 took the Content Specialty Test (90% passed).

5.2.3 Recent Changes and Planned Future Initiatives

The process of creating a campus-wide “feedback loop” in which cycles of assessment inspire curricular and pedagogical changes, which in turn are assessed for their ability to improve learning outcomes, has now become solidly established. Interventions have increased significantly since the 2001 Outcomes Assessment Committee recommendations, and further additions and adjustments are in various stages of planning and early implementation.

1. Programmatic Changes made, 2001-06

Over the last five years most departments on campus have instituted significant changes to their programs of study as a result of outcomes assessment data and analysis. The most important changes were also the most frequent: most departments added new courses and/or modified the content of existing courses in response to deficiencies identified through assessment. Other important, though less frequent curricular changes include increasing fieldwork, developing new program specializations, adjusting course sequences, increasing discussion of applications to real-world situations, and other changes, such as adding a laboratory session.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

Assessment Task Force Report 2006, Figure 2

It is illustrative to provide a few examples of programmatic and course changes that have resulted from assessment, both institutional and direct and indirect student learning assessment:

- The College’s speech-language pathology program has long been in high demand. A recent review of the program found that students were often making multiple attempts to pass the introductory courses required for the program, without success after several semesters, with the result that it was difficult for them to complete another program without taking more than the required number of credits. To ameliorate this, the department proposed, and the Academic Senate approved, the designation of “gatekeeper” courses, grouped into two semesters, which would enable students to know within a year whether they could enter the program or choose another major. At the same time, the College is providing the department with additional faculty lines to enable the program to expand and serve more students.
- Adult Collegiate Education (ACE), an adult re-entry program, revised its curriculum after a review found that the program, designed to serve adults returning to education as freshmen, was increasingly serving students with advanced standing, who transferred in college courses which usually did not fit the ACE model. The changes to the curriculum, approved in 2005 by the Senate, align ACE courses more closely with the rest of the College curriculum and facilitate the entry of ACE students into major programs.
- Weekend College has grown significantly; the number of students enrolled has doubled in the last three years. Responding to student surveys, the College has worked to create a sense of cohesion by concentrating Weekend classes in one building on campus, providing advising and tutoring on weekends, opening computer labs, and creating a Weekend student association. This semester an expanded Saturday break time, to provide more opportunities for student interaction, is being piloted. As the program continues to grow, assessment of specifically Weekend programs is becoming a more acute need.
- The Education programs monitor student success on state Content Specialty Tests (CST) as a program-level assessment instrument. Recent results on the English CST have caused concern. Closer analysis showed that many students, particularly undergraduates, in English Education programs were not well-prepared for their advanced English courses and, indeed, poor performance in those courses proved to be a predictor of lack of success on the CST. In response, specific workshops on the CST have been instituted and minimum GPA standards for undergraduates are being increased.

- In an example of a “null” result, the College studied the possible effect of requiring college algebra as a prerequisite for introductory science courses. As the data show students taking college algebra were not significantly more likely to succeed, no change was made.
- The College may place students in academic difficulty on extended probation and provide them with extra assistance when they return. Tracking shows over 75% of these students do return to the College and graduate.
- Studies show that transfer students from different feeder schools have very different success rates. The College is now studying ways in which that information might be used to focus advising and support efforts on students most at risk.
- In response to high student failure rates in the introductory pre-calculus and calculus sequence, the Mathematics Department developed a new college-level algebra course and required all math students to take a placement exam to ensure they are taking courses at the appropriate level.
- The Psychology Department conducts pre- and post-testing of information learned by students in Statistics and in Experimental Psychology. In addition to tracking knowledge acquisition and retention in these courses, the results of the assessment tests have been used by two faculty members to develop new lab-based protocols that can be used to enhance the learning of some of the concepts included in the Statistics course.
- The College’s new Bachelor of Business Administration program originated in studies of student need and, as predicted, is proving very popular. The program was designed with assessment in mind, incorporating learning goals for courses and the program. Now that the program has been in operation for a few years, the department is assessing it following a careful plan.
- As mentioned above, the college’s Writing across the Curriculum (WAC) program is developing rubrics, sponsoring workshops, and engaging Faculty Writing Fellows to assess student learning in the program. Such assessment is mandated by the Academic Senate and motivated by continuing concerns, revealed in department assessment, about the quality of student writing.
- The College’s new general education requirements necessitate the development of new courses and the modification of existing ones. As discussed above, development will be based on assessment of learning outcomes in pilot courses.
- Seminar courses in the new CUNY Honors College at Queens College have specific learning objectives. In response to student comments, learning in the Science & Technology seminar was studied using faculty interviews and student focus groups. As a result, changes are being made: an instructor is being paired with an experienced teacher and all Honors College instructors are being given course learning objectives and appraised of the College’s expectations regarding the syllabus.

2. Anticipated Programmatic Changes, 2006-11

Department chairs anticipate instituting a wide range of programmatic changes over the next five years that will further enhance student learning. These changes can be grouped into five categories:

- Develop advanced discipline specializations or degree options (39% of responses)
- Refine course content and sequence (19%)
- Increase applied research, analytic, and academic skills (13%)

- Better align programs with discipline standards (19%)
- Increase technology-related knowledge and skills (10%)

Table 3 presents the five categories with examples of each.

Table 3: Anticipated Changes over the Next Five Years

Category	Examples
Develop Advanced Discipline Specialization or Degree Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introducing an honors track • Broaden the range of content specialty electives • Provide more in-depth specializations • Develop ability to allow students to select either a specific sub-specialization or a general track
Refinement of Course Content and Sequence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update all course content • Identify and strengthen weak links in our core curriculum • Add synthesis courses • Add capstone courses • Overhaul course sequence in School Library Media
Increase Applied Research, Analytic, and Academic Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require research papers in all seminars • Introduce a research component into more courses • Expand oral communication requirements • Require all majors to develop advanced-level written and oral communication
Better Align Programs with Discipline Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align course assessments more closely with professional standards • Add production activities on the main stage • More student projects performed for the public • Increased compliance with NCATE • Provide programs that meet current needs of NY schools
Increase Technology Related Knowledge and Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add to and modify courses to use new technology • Introduce a new certification program in digital librarianship • Use statistical software in all experimental design courses

Another area of anticipated improvement involves evaluation instruments. Many departments and programs are in the process of developing additional modes of assessing learning, in which they anticipate help from the new Teaching and Learning Center on campus. Comparative Literature and Media Studies, for example, are both interested in developing some form of portfolio assessment of majors; Comparative Literature plans to ask students to include in portfolios a paper from a beginning, an intermediate, and an advanced course. Other departments are considering proficiency exams for their majors: Chemistry may administer the American Chemistry Society's standardized tests.

College-wide, significant changes are being implemented in general education. In response to previous suggestions that general education should be periodically reviewed and strategies developed to assess its effectiveness, the Academic Senate recently approved a new general education program (see Chapter 4, Curriculum and General Education). The new system, to be

phased in over the next several years, has adopted an assessment-driven approach to the development of new courses to fulfill its category and skill requirements, classifying them in terms of expected learning outcomes as basic courses, area requirements, and integration and synthesis courses. As described above, these efforts are designed to drive ongoing assessment of learning outcomes in the courses.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

2006 Assessment Task Force Report, Figure 11

5.3 Recommendations and Conclusions

The College has made advances towards becoming a community in which assessment is viewed as critical for program improvement. Assessment is also now considered an important way of validating the effectiveness of programmatic changes. Most importantly, in relation to the College's mission of providing students with a world-class education and in relation to the Middle States Association standards, the assessment of students is now viewed by departments across campus as a priority. Outcomes assessment serves as a central means of devising formative refinements at the individual student level as well as a key summative strategy for documenting discipline-specific competencies. Equally encouraging is the broad range of strategies and approaches currently implemented to document student outcomes within and across courses.

While these findings indicate that there has been a significant shift in the culture of the College around issues of assessment, important challenges remain. Skepticism about assessment lingers, centering on concerns which need to be addressed. Some faculty and chairs feel the considerable effort required for assessment is wasted if resources are not available to implement indicated changes. This concern is to some extent a byproduct of budget shortages and decreasing public support across all state higher education. In the present climate of competition for scarce resources, it is understandable that some suspect assessment as a means to punish or deprive – as only summative, an instrument for accountability, rather than an opportunity to honestly analyze strengths and weaknesses for constructive pedagogical purposes. Others express concern about the reliability and validity of available measurements, the continuous burden of developing new instruments and strategies, and the consequent need for faculty release time and/or support staff to develop and oversee ongoing assessment. Faculty may resent the added burden of assessment activities because they have less time for the multiple professorial responsibilities that cannot be delegated to adjuncts. It is recommended first of all, therefore, that this report form the basis for a frank campus-wide discussion – including the administration, the Outcomes Assessment Committee, department and program chairs, and the faculty in individual departments – regarding both progress and problems.

These problems and perceptions should not obscure the fact that the College has made significant advances and enhancements in assessment activities that help us to accomplish our stated mission, particularly in view of our limited resources. To facilitate the continuation of this progress, the College should implement the following recommendations, to help position us more firmly as a truly self-evaluating organization, committed to the Middle States Association ideal of one hallmark characteristic of program excellence: “The ultimate goal of outcomes assessment is the improvement of teaching and learning.”

1. The existing Outcomes Assessment Committee, chaired by the Associate Provost, should be enlarged and encouraged to take a wider and more proactive role across campus in promoting, explaining, and coordinating assessment efforts. Once outcomes data are collected, for example, the Committee could work with administration to disseminate these findings, and to create forums through which such information can be utilized to make decisions on program improvement.
2. The expanded Outcomes Assessment Committee should work more closely with the Queens College Alumni Office, for mutual advantage. Student data collected for assessment may be of use to the Alumni Office in fundraising and college recruitment; conversely, when the Alumni Office does follow-up activities such as mailings, the Assessment Committee should explore ways that these communications and events could be utilized for gathering assessment data. Membership on the Assessment Committee should be expanded to include representation of alumni concerns, as well as other College constituencies such as current students. To help maintain the connection of alumni to the College, a web-based community could be established, on which graduates could place their profiles. Such information would also help the College track alumni and their achievements after graduation.
3. The College should continue the assessment survey performed as part of the present Self-Study Report on an annual basis, as a follow-up exercise and to provide some trend data for future self-study efforts. Department chairs should be encouraged to extend the survey among all faculty members.
4. The incoming general education requirements should maintain outcomes assessment as an integral part of the implementation of this new program (see Chapter 4, Curriculum and General Education).
5. The College should continue to invest in appropriate information technology resources to enable evaluation efforts like the NCATE test to expand throughout the College, to help students develop portfolios, and to facilitate other tasks such as analysis.
6. One crucial aspect of the College's educational mission that has not yet been effectively assessed is the effort to teach tolerance and celebrate diversity in our increasingly global world. Much of the responsibility for promoting and monitoring this effort at the behavioral level has been the province of the Affirmative Action apparatus (see Chapter 2, Affirmative Action). However, such activities have an educational component and the College should study how successfully it promotes access, tolerance, and mutual understanding to the full range of our diverse student body, whether distinguished by physical disability, gender, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation.