

**New England Commission of Higher Education**

# **Visiting Team Resource Guide**



Please visit [neche.org/about/#staff](https://neche.org/about/#staff) for staff contact information and [neche.org/resources-for-evaluators/](https://neche.org/resources-for-evaluators/) for additional resources for NECHE evaluators.

## **BEFORE THE VISIT READING THE SELF-STUDY AND APPLYING THE STANDARDS**

### **Before You Read the Self-Study**

1. Read the prior Commission letters and the institution's history sheet (which are in your digital kit). These will let you know any particular areas of emphasis that the Commission has identified for special attention in the report.

### **Read the Standards for Accreditation**

2. In the self-study, the institution is asked to describe how it meets the Standards, appraise how well it meets the Standards, and (in the projection section) articulate its commitments for improvement related to the Standards. You should approach the self-study with the Standards foremost in your mind.

### **Prepare to Take Notes**

3. One task of the team is to validate the self-study: As you read the self-study, identify questions to be answered on campus and how you will find answers. Who will you want to talk with and what will you want to ask them? And, what documents will you want to read?
4. Take notes on the major findings that you discern from the self-study. Part of your work on-site will be to validate those impressions.

### **Take Advantage of the Surrounding Material**

5. The Institutional Characteristics form at the beginning of the self-study will give you an overall idea of the size and organization of the institution. It will also identify branch campuses, other instructional locations, programs offered at a distance, and contractual arrangements. Because the evaluation covers all programs, all formats, all locations for the institution, it is helpful to keep this information in your thinking. In the Institutional Characteristics form you will also find the names and titles of key institutional officers – helping you figure out who you will want to meet.
6. The introduction will provide an overview of the process, giving you a sense for how participatory the work was and perhaps also identifying some key individuals and groups with whom you will want to meet.
7. The overview will help you understand the history and character of the institution, as well as provide the key findings from the self-study.
8. The Data Dashboards, accessible via the Evaluators Portal, also have much useful information about the institution, including its measures of student success (Standard 8, *Educational Effectiveness*). Some evaluators start here, then read the text of the chapter.
9. The E-series Forms (Making Assessment More Explicit) provide information on the institution's approach to assessment and data about student learning outcomes.

### **Read the Self-Study**

10. Some evaluators read the self-study three times: a first time to get an overall view of the institution; a second time focusing on their particular assignment(s); and a third time to see how their section fits into the overall institutional picture.
11. Nine Chapters: Description, Appraisal, Projection. Can you tell how well the institution meets the Standard? What strengths and concerns emerge? How does the institution demonstrate institutional effectiveness – that it has examined this aspect of its functioning and used the results for improvement? What evidence does the institution use to support its claims? What commitments is the institution making for improvement?
12. Re-read the Standards. Has the institution addressed all of the key elements? Do you have concerns beyond those identified by the institution about how well the Standards are met?

**EVALUATOR'S OBSERVATION SHEET**

**STANDARD OR AREA** \_\_\_\_\_

**SELF-STUDY OBSERVATIONS** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**QUESTIONS TO ANSWER**

**WHOM TO MEET WITH**

<b>QUESTIONS TO ANSWER</b>	<b>WHOM TO MEET WITH</b>

**STRENGTHS**

**CONCERNS**

<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>CONCERNS</b>

## SAMPLE SCHEDULE FOR A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION

2 years before visit	Commission sends letter to institution as reminder of visit, requests preference for visit dates, invites representatives to attend Self-Study Workshop.
12-18 months before visit	Commission staff member meets with institution CEO and/or self-study directors to discuss self-study process and answer questions about the visit.
1 year before visit	Staff appoints team chair (after CEO's review); chair materials sent (digital kit from NECHE office).
Semester prior to visit	<p>Chair attends Chairs Workshop Institution invites chair for a preliminary visit to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. assess self-study progress</li> <li>2. discuss areas for evaluation</li> <li>3. work out arrangements for visit (accommodations, schedules, visits to off-campus locations, etc.)</li> </ol> <p>After visit, chair communicates with Commission staff about progress of self-study and team composition.</p>
Semester prior to visit	Commission staff select and invite prospective team members. Replacements made, if necessary. Final team list sent to CEO, team chair and team members. Final team roster becomes visible in the institutional and evaluator portal. Digital kits sent to team members from NECHE office.
Semester prior to visit	Institution submits draft of self-study for Commission staff review.
Semester of visit	Evaluators attend Evaluators Workshop.
6 weeks prior to visit	Institution uploads self-study to institutional portal.
2-6 weeks prior to visit	Chair corresponds with team: schedule, accommodations, areas of responsibility are finalized.
<hr style="border-top: 3px double #000;"/>	
➤ <b><u>CAMPUS VISIT</u></b> ◀	Team on campus. Team develops rough draft of report, list of strengths and concerns, and confidential recommendation to Commission. Chair gives oral exit report.
<hr style="border-top: 3px double #000;"/>	
4 weeks after visit	Chair uploads to evaluator portal completed first draft of report to team members and Commission office; team members and Commission staff suggest changes and corrections; team members submit confidential evaluation of chair via evaluator portal.
6 weeks after visit	Chair uploads to evaluator portal first draft of team report for review of <u>factual</u> accuracy by institution.

7 weeks after visit	Chair receives CEO's comments on factual accuracy of report.
9 weeks after visit	Chair uploads to evaluator portal the final report and the draft/final confidential recommendation. The chair's confidential evaluation of team members completed via evaluator portal.
12 weeks after visit	Once final team report is uploaded, CEO writes institutional response; when received, institutional response goes to the chair and to the Commissioners via evaluator and commission portal.
Semester following visit Fall: September/November Spring: March/April	President meets with Commission; NECHE notifies institution and team of its action on accreditation status.

<b>Comprehensive Visit Team Digital Kit</b>	<b>Focused Visit Team Digital Kit</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Standards for Accreditation</li> <li>2. Evaluation Manual</li> <li>3. Expense voucher</li> <li>4. Team members' Confidential Evaluation Form</li> <li>5. Previous notification letters back to last comprehensive visit</li> <li>6. Letter to CEO listing final team</li> <li>7. Evaluation Summary Sheet</li> <li>8. Guidelines for the Review of Off-Campus and Distance Education Programming During a Comprehensive Evaluation (if applicable)</li> <li>9. History sheet</li> <li>10. Policy on the Periodic Review of Accredited Institutions</li> <li>11. Materials on international travel if applicable</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Standards for Accreditation</li> <li>2. Evaluation Manual</li> <li>3. Expense voucher</li> <li>4. Team members' Confidential Evaluation Form</li> <li>5. Previous notification letters back to last comprehensive visit</li> <li>6. Previous evaluation report</li> <li>7. CEO's response</li> <li>8. Letter to CEO listing final team</li> <li>9. Evaluation Summary Sheet</li> <li>10. History sheet</li> <li>11. Policy on the Periodic Review of Accredited Institutions</li> <li>12. Materials on international travel if applicable</li> </ol>

To access the most up to date information regarding Comprehensive, Focused and Substantive Change visits, please go to the [Institution Reports & Evaluations](#) page on the NECHE website.

**Sample Email from Team Chair Arranging Preliminary Visit**

TO: President I. M. Curtius  
Notreal College  
Mount Hope, New England

CC: Lawrence Schall

The following arrangements have been made for my NECHE preliminary visit, and unless you advise otherwise, I hope to see you or your representative at the Mount Hope airport on DATE at 8:40 p.m.

DATE  
7:10 p.m. Depart Boston on Ransom Airlines, Flight #1712  
8:40 p.m. Arrive Mount Hope

DATE  
3:55 p.m. Depart Mount Hope on Ransom Airlines, Flight #41

It is my understanding that the purpose of the preliminary visit is two-fold: (1) to help Notreal College understand how the team will operate; and (2) to help me understand the institution so that I may plan how best to deploy members of the team. Within this context, I expect our time will be well spent if I accomplish the following objectives during the preliminary visit:

1. gain a clear impression of Notreal College to learn how it is organized and to sense its atmosphere and style;
2. talk with a number of administrators, faculty and student leaders to determine how they are involved in the self-study and what they expect to achieve as a result of the study and evaluation process;
3. determine from you the names and titles of key people on the campus with whom team members should meet (other than those in line and staff positions);
4. make arrangements for a meeting with appropriate members of the Notreal College staff and with Board of Trustee members during the evaluation visit;
5. make arrangements for visits to off-campus locations;
6. check up on the practical arrangements for the team visit; and
7. discuss plans for the team's first evening of the evaluation visit.

It would be helpful, President Curtius, if you would send some reading materials to me that would fulfill, in part, the first objective, since the preliminary visit will only be eight hours or so in length. A current draft of your institution's self-study would also help provide me with a sense of progress being made and the issues that are emerging.

Additionally, if it is convenient, I think I should stay in the facility the team will be using. In this way, I will be able to become familiar with the accommodations and give appropriate advice to the members of the team.

I look forward to meeting you and your colleagues next month. If I can clarify the contents of this letter or be of any assistance, please feel free, President Curtius, to call me at my office or home.

Sincerely,

Donald T. Frett  
President

**Sample Email to Institution After Preliminary Visit  
about Arrangements for Comprehensive Evaluation**

TO: Ms. Alma Halper  
Assistant to the President  
Notreal College

CC: President I. M. Curtius  
Lawrence Schall

I was delighted to have the opportunity to meet you, and I am pleased that you will be the contact person for the NECHE visit next semester. I will try to keep you informed of all details related to the visit so that you will have ample opportunity to make the necessary plans and to anticipate the team's needs.

Let me outline a number of items that will need attention and provide suggestions for how they should be handled. You may contact me for further clarification on any of these.

1. Travel arrangements. Members of the team will be coming from various states in the region. I would anticipate that most people will drive, but there is a chance that someone may choose to fly. If a team member does need to fly, someone at Notreal College should be designated to pick them up at the airport and provide transportation to the hotel.
2. Lodging, meals, conference rooms at hotel.
  - a. Each team member should have a single room reserved for them for Sunday, Monday and Tuesday nights.
  - b. A conference room should be reserved for the team at the hotel from Sunday noon until Wednesday noon. We will need a room that can be locked when we are not using it.
  - c. At least one PC and a printer should be available in the room from Sunday morning until Wednesday noon. The PC should have standard word processing software (Microsoft Word, if possible). As some members of the team will bring laptops, the room should provide wireless access to accommodate their use.
  - d. All bills for rooms and meals should be put on a master slip to be billed to the College.
3. Team workroom on campus. Beginning on Monday morning, the team will need a conference room on campus to use as a team meeting place and workroom. The exhibits compiled should be accessible electronically to the team. We will need to have a room that can be locked and secured during our visit. As discussed with the President during my preliminary visit, a computer, printer, and telephone should be available in the workroom, along with a campus directory.
4. Timetable. Enclosed is a draft timetable for the visit. Please note the sections checked which need to be arranged by you or another appropriate individual on campus. The major items to be scheduled are the following:



- a. *Sunday* – Social hour/dinner with selected staff.
- b. *Monday* – Lunch with (two groups): student leaders and faculty.

Also, three open meetings for members of the College community from 4:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m. (one for faculty, one for students, one for staff). Please select rooms conducive to informal discussion. In addition, we would like to have coffee, tea, soft drinks, and cookies or some sort of snack available. These events should be widely publicized on campus in the weeks before the team visit. It is our expectation that the president, deans, and division chairs will not attend these meetings, since they have other opportunities to talk with members of the team.

Two members of the team will visit two of the College's off-campus locations, per our discussion. The scheduling of these visits should ensure that the team members get to meet the location director, a sample of faculty who teach at the site, and some students. I understand library and student services staff are located at the larger site, and it therefore will be useful to meet them there as well.

- c. *Monday* – Morning meeting with Trustees. This can be scheduled either on- or off-campus in a location that is most convenient for the Trustees.
- d. *Wednesday* – Scheduling of a room in which to conduct the exit report. The room needs to be large enough to accommodate the members of the team and whichever members of the College community are invited.

This should cover the essential details of the visit. Many of these will not need to be dealt with until the beginning of school next semester, but I wanted you to be aware of the range of logistical details.

Please feel free to share any questions you may have. I'm looking forward to working with you to ensure a successful visit both for the team and for Notreal College.

Cordially,

Donald T. Frett  
President

**SAMPLE EMAIL FROM CHAIR TO TEAM MEMBERS  
FOR A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION**

TO: Ms. Julia Command  
Vice President of Student Affairs  
Ivyless University

Mr. Philo Fax  
Dean of Institutional Research and  
Assessment  
Secular College

Dr. Freudian Quippe  
Chair, Communication Department  
Old State College

Dr. Sarah Ratched  
Dean of Nursing  
Comprehensive College

Dr. Ima Expert  
Vice President for Academic Affairs  
Very Private College

Mr. Dow Moody  
Vice President of Finance  
Awesome University

Dr. Real T. Pho-Kyss  
Director of Planning and Strategic  
Initiatives  
Marley College

CC: Dean L. Hussel  
Lawrence Schall

Dear Colleagues:

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome all of you to the team that will visit Notreal College later this semester. Although the visit is still about six weeks away, there are a few details that I would like to get out of the way early so that our time on campus can be used as efficiently as possible.

On the attached Evaluation Preference Form, you will find your tentative areas of responsibility for the standards of accreditation. You will note that each person has either a primary and/or a primary and secondary area. In addition, some of the additional items we need to make sure are addressed in our report are listed: the College's plans for distance education; Notreal's off-campus site at the Suburban Health Center in nearby Wishbone Valley; the Commission's concern about retention and graduation rates, particularly for students of color; and a review of the institution's award of credit. I have tried to match your expertise with appropriate areas of the evaluation, but don't claim a perfect match. If you feel you would be more comfortable and productive with a different responsibility, please let me know. The individual assigned with primary responsibility is expected to write that section of our report.

Listed on another attachment is a tentative schedule for our four days in Mount Hope. We will try to fine tune the schedule by including your suggestions during a conference call I

would like to arrange with the team in about two weeks to discuss the visit. My office will be in touch with some possible times for the call that will last approximately one hour.

During our visit we will be staying at the Sheraton-Superba Inn.. In addition, a copy of a letter from Dean Hussel which outlines travel information is included. All room and meal expenses will be billed to the College so you will not need cash for this purpose.

Notreal College will make computers and printers available to us both on campus and at the hotel. Please let me know if you plan to bring your own laptop.

The self-study is available through the evaluator portal. If you would prefer to receive a hard copy, please indicate your preference in the evaluator portal as well.

I would like the team to remain together throughout the entire visit if at all possible – from the initial team meeting at 3:00 p.m. on Sunday until noon on Wednesday. The demands on everyone's time after we return to our own campuses makes it imperative for us to complete a preliminary draft of our report before we leave Mount Hope. Please call or write me if you have any suggestions or questions. I look forward to working with you.

Cordially,

Donald T. Frett  
President

#### EVALUATION PREFERENCE FORM

	PRIMARY	SECONDARY
Mission and Purposes	Frett	All
Planning and Evaluation	Pho-Kyss	Moody
Organization and Governance	Expert	Frett
The Academic Program	Ratched & Quippe	Expert
Students	Command	Fax
Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship	Quippe	Ratched

Institutional Resources	Moody	Pho-Kyss
Educational Effectiveness	Fax	Command
Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure	Command & Pho-Kyss	All

**ADDITIONAL AREAS:**

Off-campus Site: Suburban Health Center	Expert	Ratched
Distance Education: RN-BSN Program in development	Ratched	Expert
Area of Emphasis: Implementation of Professional Foundation (General Education) Program	Quippe	Expert
Credit Hour Review	Expert	Quippe

**Sample Email from Chair to Team Members for a Focused Evaluation**

TO: Dr. Brenda Behan  
Professor of English  
Urban Community College

Mr. Stephen Hawkings  
Director of Operations  
Galactica College

CC: Sarah Keuze  
Lawrence Schall

Dear Colleagues:

Welcome to the team that will be visiting Acropolis Community College this semester. Since the visit is about a month away, there are a few details I would like to get out of the way so that our time on campus will be used as efficiently as possible.

As you know, this is a focused evaluation visit and we therefore will only be reviewing those areas specified by the Commission for the evaluation report. To assist us in identifying the appropriate individuals at the College with whom we should meet, Dr. Sarah Keuze, Director of Management and Planning at Acropolis Community College, will be emailing a list to each of us with the names of the key people in each area of evaluation. Once we have the list in hand, my office will be in touch to arrange a conference call that will last approximately forty minutes so that the three of us will have an opportunity to discuss the schedule for the actual visit.

At this point, the plan is for the team to gather at approximately 6:30 p.m. on Sunday evening. I have asked Sarah to schedule a social hour from 7:00 to 8:00 so that we can meet some of the key people at Acropolis Community College. Unlike a comprehensive evaluation visit, we will not have a formal dinner with the College staff. Rather, after the social hour, we will have dinner together at the hotel to begin our work. A map telling you how to get to the Sheraton-Athena where we will be staying is available at this link:.

I look forward to working with you on this review.

Cordially,

Paul Mead  
Dean of the Undergraduate School

### Timetable For Comprehensive Visit - Sample

Sunday	
3:00-5:00 p.m.	Initial meeting of the visiting team (conference room, hotel) Introductions; General discussions of purpose and procedures; Discuss visit schedule; Agree on individual committee member responsibilities; ; Reports from visits to off-campus locations (if any); Finalize Monday meetings.
6:00-9:00 p.m.	Social hour/dinner with president and selected staff
9:15 p.m.	Meeting of visiting team (hotel) <i>General observations; Identification of strengths, concerns, and issues to explore on Monday.</i>
Monday	
7:00	Team breakfast (hotel)
8:00-11:00 a.m.	Scheduled meetings with members of the college community; workroom time to review syllabi and other supporting documents
11:00 a.m.–noon	Meeting with trustees
12:00-1:00 p.m.	Lunch (2 groups) a. with student leaders b. with faculty leaders
1:00-4:00 p.m.	Scheduled meetings with members of the college community; visits to off-campus sites
4:00-5:00 p.m.	Open meetings for members of college community with team members: Faculty/Students/Staff (note that these meetings need not occur simultaneously)
5:15-5:45	Check in meeting between Team Chair and CEO
6:30 p.m.-	Dinner and meeting of visiting team <i>Discussion of observations, strengths, concerns, findings (hotel).</i>
Tuesday	
7:00	Team breakfast (hotel)
9:00 a.m.-noon	Scheduled meetings with members of the college community; workroom time to review syllabi and other supporting documents
12:00-1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:00-5:00 p.m.	To be arranged: Follow-up meetings ... document review ... writing time
6:30 p.m.-	Dinner and team meeting of team <i>Summarize institutional strengths and concerns; reach consensus on the confidential recommendation; complete report drafts.</i>
Wednesday	
11:00 a.m.	Team delivers exit report

**CHAIR'S AGENDA FOR INITIAL TEAM MEETING**

typically conducted via Zoom roughly four-six weeks prior to the visit

1. Introductions: Ask team members to give their names, a brief description of their jobs, and to indicate whether or not they have accreditation experience.
2. Review individual team member assignments and responsibilities.
3. Finalize the timetable.
4. Ask team members to identify the people that they plan to meet with on Monday. Ask them to pair up or go in three's on Monday morning to visit with the senior administrators, if at all possible.
5. Review a few of the housekeeping items, such as:
  - a. The team will eat together each evening at the hotel beginning at 6 p.m.;
  - b. Any alcohol will need to be purchased by the individual and not put on the hotel tab;
  - c. Personal expenses are to be paid for by the individual;
  - d. In fairness to the institution being visited, all home campus communications (phone, email) should be kept to a minimum.
  - e. The team will meet each morning at 7:45 in the parking lot to car pool to the campus;
  - f. Team meetings will not go beyond 10:30 p.m. each night.
6. Hand out/discuss chair's instructions on how report chapters should be prepared so that team members know what to expect as they write their chapters.
7. Ask team members to carefully develop a list of initial observations for each of their areas, including any particular strengths and concerns, to share/compare/discuss at the Monday evening meeting.
8. Indicate there is no need for classroom visitations.
9. Discuss the structured interview approach and review the Protocol for On-Campus Interviews. Indicate that it is often helpful for team members to prepare a list of common questions in advance to ask everyone – making it easier to compare responses.
10. Discuss the format for the opening dinner, including that team members will be introduced by the chair and that the president will give general observations about the state of the college.
11. Remind team members they will need to complete and submit electronically to the chair their report chapter(s) no later than 8:00 a.m. on Wednesday.

12. Discuss initial impressions of the institution based on reading the self-study. Are there questions or areas of concern the team will need to explore? If some team members have previously visited branch campuses or off-campus instructional locations, ask them to talk about what they learned and if there are any issues for follow-up.



## PROTOCOL FOR ON CAMPUS INTERVIEWS

When interviewing faculty and staff during the campus visit:

1. Introduce yourself and indicate that you are a member of the NECHE team and that everything the person says will be held in the strictest confidence.
2. Indicate that you are going to take notes; then you should do so in order not to forget who told you what.
3. Write down the name of the person to whom you are talking and his or her title.
4. Interview without a supervisor present or in the vicinity.
5. Avoid dealing with any union issues.
6. Avoid dealing with personalities or discussing the names of individuals.
7. Always avoid saying, “We do it this way on my campus.”
8. Thank people for their time and courtesy.

### STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

#### “DO’S AND DON’TS” FOR NECHE TEAM MEMBERS

##### **Do:**

- Read the Standards ... read the Standards ... read the Standards
- Read the whole self-study, including the surrounding material
- Identify people/offices you will need to speak with on campus
- Prepare questions to ask
- Contact your team chair with any requests for additional documents
- Make known any dietary or other needs you have
- Take notes; include who you talked with
- Spend time reading the exhibits and reviewing sample syllabi
- Focus on educational quality and measures of student success
- Determine how you will most effectively write your part of the team report (an outline ahead of time, a draft ahead of time, text created for the first time while you are on campus)
- Refer to the Standards often while you are writing your part of the team report
- Incorporate, as appropriate, materials from the data forms into your part of the team report
- Include evidence in your part of the team report
- Refer to relevant Commission policies
- Meet deadlines established by your team chair
- Draw on the experience and expertise of other team members
- Resist the temptation to call your office, check your email, listen to voicemail, etc.
- Maintain confidentiality about the institution and the visit

**Don't:**

- Wait until the day before the visit to look at the self-study
- Edit or “grade” the self-study
- Try to solve the institution’s problems
- Say “we do it this way on our campus”
- Get entangled in “campus politics”
- Pay too much attention to what’s happening on campus the week you are there
- Get distracted by interesting problems that are unrelated to the purpose of the visit
- Talk more than you listen
- Fill every minute of the visit with appointments
- Forget about off-campus locations and distance education
- Hesitate to ask for assistance/advice from your team chair, other team members or a member of the Commission staff
- Leave campus until you have given a draft of your section of the team report to the team chair
- Take it personally when the team chair edits your section of the team report and deletes your favorite sentence

## TEAM REPORT

### Evaluators: Advice On Preparing YOUR SECTION OF THE TEAM REPORT

#### **Before the Visit:**

- Before the visit, the team chair will make his/her expectations clear to the team: who will be writing what, in what format, and by when.
- You may find it useful to begin a draft of your sections of the report after reading the self-study, knowing there will be major revisions. This early draft can be a way of figuring out what you (think you) know and what you need to find out. (If you don't do this, make extensive notes or prepare an outline so you don't have to start from scratch while you're on campus.)

#### **Gathering Information during the Visit**

- Keep extensive notes on interviews and other sources of information. Note the source and what you learned. The team chair as well as other members of the team will also rely on your notes.
- Re-read the standard(s) for which you are responsible to make sure you are gathering the information you need to write your section(s) of the report.

#### **Writing the Draft Report**

- Write to the *Standards*. The team report should describe how and how well the institution meets the *Standards* in light of its mission.
- Use the subheadings that you find in the *Standards*. For example, Chapter Two should have a section on Planning and a section on Evaluation.
- Remember that the report needs to stand on its own. It should have enough description – and enough evidence – that a reader unfamiliar with the self-study and the campus can understand how the institution meets the *Standard* in light of its mission.
- Be sure to touch on all three aspects of educational quality: inputs, processes and outcomes.
- Reference the content of the Data Dashboards and the E-series (Making Assessment More Explicit) forms as appropriate.
- Do not include a list of strengths and concerns in each chapter – but write the chapter with enough analysis that it is clear what you believe the strengths and concerns are in the area. (Instead, team chairs include the institution's overall strengths and concerns at the end of the team report. This list serves as the framework for both the chair's oral exit report to the institution and the team's confidential recommendation to the Commission.)
- In a comprehensive evaluation, give attention to any special areas that the institution selected for emphasis or that the Commission cited in its notification letters.
- In a focused evaluation, avoid getting into areas that are not pertinent to the visit. The report should focus on the areas the team was asked to examine. If the team runs across big problems that are outside those areas, we ask the chair to refer to them in a separate section of the report. The Commission will determine how to follow up on any such concerns found.
- Re-read the *Standards* to see if you missed anything significant.
- Review your section for spelling and grammar.

**After the Visit**

- Team chairs are told to use a firm editorial hand to give coherence, consistency, and adherence to the report, i.e., to put it into one voice. Be prepared that the chair may have to cut the material you submit, perhaps even your favorite phrases!
- The chair will upload the first draft of the report to the evaluator portal for review within four weeks of the visit. Please respond with your corrections promptly. The later the report is completed, the greater the likelihood that something (or someone) will go awry.

## WRITING EVIDENCE-BASED TEAM REPORTS

### 1. Identify the source

Based on interviews with part-time faculty, the team concludes ...

After reviewing course syllabi, the team is persuaded ...

At the open meeting with students, the team was made aware ...

Review of the audited financial statements and management letter indicated ...

### 2. Avoid the passive voice

Concern was expressed about advising...

Dissatisfaction was voiced with the hours the library is open ...

Admissions criteria are reviewed regularly ...

Competencies are established ...

Examination results are used ...

### 3. Be specific

While students at off-campus locations have electronic access to library and information resources and registration, they must travel to the main campus for academic advising and financial aid services.

- *Not* -

The College's provision of services to students who study at off-campus locations is uneven.

### 4. Use numbers

The total endowment value has dropped considerably from \$13.7 million at the close of FY20 to \$9.5 million at the close of FY21. In addition, the institution was informed by the provider of its \$5 million line of credit that the line will not be renewed.

- *Not* -

Endowment values have dropped considerably, and access to available credit has been significantly reduced.

### 5. Base judgments on data, not on personal experience or opinion

Retention and graduation rates for students of color are typically 10-15 percentage points lower than those for majority students. In addition, the results of a campus climate survey indicated that students of color often feel isolated.

- *Not* -

In the opinion of the team, students of color are not well served by the institution.

### **TEAM CHAIRS: ADVICE ON PREPARING THE TEAM REPORT**

1. Before the visit, make your expectations clear to the team: who will be writing what, in what form you want it, and by when. Encourage team members to begin writing as they prepare for the visit; drafts can always be modified based on what the team learns while on campus.
2. Encourage team members to write more rather than less. It will be easier for you to cut material than to ask for more text at a later time. You will also want to achieve an appropriate balance in terms of the length of individual chapters. Some chapters will be longer than others (e.g., *The Academic Program* will be longer than *Mission and Purposes*), and you'll want to avoid undue brevity as well as undue length.
3. As you prepare the report, be sure it:
  - focuses on the content of the *Standards for Accreditation*. Does the narrative of the report identify the major strengths and concerns of the institution with respect to each standard?
  - includes enough detail about the institution so that readers who don't have access to the self-study will have a clear picture of the institution.
  - includes sufficient evidence to support the judgments made. "Writing Evidence-based Team Reports" (included in this workbook) provides some suggestions.
  - references the Data Dashboards and E-series forms, especially in Standards 7 (*Institutional Resources*) and 8 (*Educational Effectiveness*).
  - gives attention to any special topics the institution selected for emphasis, as well as those cited by the Commission in its notification letters.
  - provides coverage of all the institution's student bodies: by degree level, modality, location, or other as otherwise defined.
  - includes, where appropriate, coverage of distance and correspondence education and off-campus instructional sites. Indicate which sites the team visited.
  - confirms, in Standard 4 (*The Academic Program*) as part of the "Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit" section, the team's conclusion on whether the institution's policy on the award of academic credit is appropriate and sufficiently detailed and that the evidence demonstrates the institution is following its policy.
  - documents the team's review of the institution's compliance with federal regulations relating to Title IV in the Affirmation of Compliance section.
4. Strive for a balance of coverage in the report on inputs, processes, and outcomes. (See the "Focusing on Outcomes" section for examples.) Some attention to inputs and processes is appropriate and necessary, but make sure the report primarily focuses on outcomes.
5. As chair, you are responsible for writing the introduction, the chapter on Standard 1 (*Mission and Purposes*), the Affirmation of Compliance section and the Institutional Summary. Rather than providing a laundry list of strengths and concerns, limit the concluding list to a manageable number of the institution's top strengths and the major concerns it should focus on.
6. The draft report will be reviewed by the team and NECHE staff once it is uploaded to the evaluator portal.
7. Remember that statements such as "The College does not meet the Standard on *Institutional Resources*" belong in the confidential recommendation, not the team report.

## Recommended Format for Team Reports (Comprehensive Evaluation)

### Sections of the Report

- a. Cover Page – Please refer to the template included as the cover page of the Notreal College Report found in the Visiting Team Resource Guide, the Evaluation Manual, and the Chairs Digital Kit.
- b. Introduction – Written by the chair, the introduction identifies the type of evaluation undertaken (comprehensive) and summarizes the evaluation process by giving an indication of the types of materials reviewed by the team and the sorts of meetings conducted during the visit, including visits to off-campus locations. Other suggestions for the Introduction are found in the *Evaluation Manual*.
- c. Narrative – Here, include a chapter for each of the nine *Standards for Accreditation*. Each chapter should describe how the institution meets the *Standard* and highlight particular strengths of the institution as well as any concerns noted by the team. **Make sure to give attention to (1) any special topics selected for emphasis by the institution or that the Commission cited in its notification letters; (2) all of the institution’s student bodies: by degree level, modality, location, or as otherwise defined; (3) any distance and correspondence education and off-campus instructional sites, and (4) standards of student achievement set by the institution and its measures of student success. Also note that the chapter on Standard 4, *The Academic Program*, should discuss the team’s review of the institution’s policy on credit award as part of the “Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit” section.** Other suggestions for the report narrative are provided in the *Evaluation Manual*.
- d. Affirmation of Compliance Summary – This summary documents the institution’s compliance with federal requirements relating to Title IV program participation, including relevant requirements of the Higher Education Act. It should contain at least one or two sentences addressing each of the items on the Affirmation of Compliance form: credit hour policy; credit transfer policies and articulation agreements; student complaint procedures; verification of student identity for distance and correspondence education; and public notification of the evaluation visit and opportunity for public comment.
- e. Summative list of institutional strengths and concerns – The report should conclude with a list of strengths and concerns of major significance to the institution. This is not meant to be a compilation of all the strengths and concerns mentioned in the report narrative; rather, its purpose is to focus the attention of the institution (and the Commission) on the matters of greatest importance. Other suggestions regarding the summary of strengths and concerns can be found in the *Evaluation Manual*.

### Formatting

- a. Length – No standard length has been established for team reports, but experience suggests that appropriate coverage and analysis of the institution will probably require around 35 single-spaced pages. Clarity and substance are essential.

- b. Organization – Begin a new section with each Standard; use the subheadings in the Standards in the report as well. The concluding section of the report should include the Affirmation of Compliance review and the major Strengths and Concerns.
- c. Format – The report should be single-spaced, with 12-point font, set the left margin to 1 inch, and include page numbers.
- d. Final – an electronic copy (single, searchable pdf file) of the final team report is uploaded to the NECHE Evaluator Portal by the team chair.



<b>Recommended Format for Team Report (Focused Evaluation)</b>
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**Sections of the Report**

- a. Cover Page – Please refer to the template included as the cover page of the Notreal College Report found in the Visiting Team Resource Guide, the Evaluation Manual, and the Chairs Digital Kit.
- b. Introduction – Written by the chair, the introduction identifies the type of evaluation undertaken (focused) and summarizes the evaluation process by giving an indication of the types of materials reviewed by the team and the sorts of meetings conducted during the visit, including visits to off-campus locations. Other suggestions for the Introduction are found in the *Evaluation Manual*.
- c. Narrative – Include a section for each of the focus areas evaluated by the team. Each section should describe how the institution has addressed the area of emphasis and describe whether the institution has adequately responded to the Commission's concerns. Other suggestions for the report narrative are found in the *Evaluation Manual*.
- d. Summary – The report should conclude with a list of identified strengths and concerns related to each area of emphasis. This is not meant to be a compilation of all the strengths and concerns mentioned in the narrative section of the report; rather, its purpose is to focus the attention of the institution (and the Commission) on the matters of greatest importance. Other suggestions regarding the summary list of strengths and concerns can be found in the *Evaluation Manual*.

**Formatting**

- a. Length – The length of a focused visit report depends on the number of areas of concern to be addressed. Experience suggests that appropriate coverage and analysis of an area of concern will probably require two to three (2-3) single-spaced pages; the introduction and summary will each be about one page in length. Clarity and substance are essential.
- b. Format – The report should be single-spaced. Please use a 12-point font, set the leftmargin to 1 inch, and include page numbers.
- c. Final – an electronic copy (single, searchable pdf file) of the final team report is uploaded to the NECHE Evaluator Portal by the team chair.

Report to the  
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students  
of

**NOTREAL COLLEGE**  
Mount Hope, New England

by  
An Evaluation Team representing the  
New England Commission of Higher Education

Prepared after study of the institution's  
self-evaluation report and site visit  
October 30-November 2, 2024

**The members of the team:**

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*Observer:* Mr. Wedo Lysenses, New England Board of Higher Education, Boston, MA

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

## Introduction

Throughout the Evaluation Team's visit, all members of the Notreal College community were candid in their comments and offered full assistance to the team. All of the individuals with whom the team met were well aware of the self-study report and the purpose of the team's visit. Extensive meetings were conducted on a one-on-one basis and with small groups with representatives and leaders from all areas of Notreal College including faculty, students, trustees, staff, and alumni. A meeting was held for trustees only, with six trustees in attendance including the Chair of the Board and the chairs of the major trustee committees. The Vice Chair of the Board attended the opening dinner meeting on Sunday. The team members met with approximately 34 members of the administrative staff including the president and all senior administrators, 21 members of the faculty including all department chairs and the chair of the Faculty Council, 12 students including the co-chairs of the Student Government Association and several residence hall RAs, and key members of the Self-Study Steering Committee, the Curriculum Committee, and the editors/authors of the strategic plan. Also, in open meetings, the team met with 34 faculty members (24 full-time and 10 part-time), 30 students, and 15 members of the staff. Two team members visited the institution's off-campus instructional location at Suburban Health Center during the visit, and one team member went to Achiever High School to review the College's dual enrollment program.

The Evaluation Team found the self-study report and the other materials provided, such as the strategic plan, viewbook, various handbooks, the campus master plan, and audited financial statements, to be sufficiently comprehensive and an accurate description of the state of the College. The team appreciates the preparation of the self-study to include links to the most important exhibits as well as an virtual workshop where supportive documents were housed and organized. A review of these documents before and during the team's visit to Notreal College, the chair's preliminary visit the semester before the on-site evaluation, and the team's visit to campus together have provided the basis for the information and evaluative judgments contained in the nine sections of this report which address the *Standards for Accreditation* of the New England Commission of Higher Education.

This evaluation of Notreal College is a comprehensive evaluation following its interim report submitted and accepted in 2019, an Annual Report on Finance and Enrollment submitted and accepted in 2020, and a visit to assess implementation of its nursing and health and fitness programs in 2022.

### *1. Mission and Purposes*

Since its founding as the Notreal Academy in 1877, Notreal College has developed in response to changing times and the educational needs of its students. In the Fall of 1925, Notreal Academy was incorporated with two years of preparatory school and two years of college. By 1957, the preparatory courses were completely phased out and the institution became the Notreal Career School. In 1945, the College charter was amended to allow for the introduction of business-related baccalaureate programs. The formal transition to a baccalaureate institution, with a new mission reflecting this change, occurred in 1975 at which time the institution changed its name to Notreal College. Retaining the College's focus on offering professional degree programs, master's degree programs that built on the institution's undergraduate programs were added in the early 2000's prompting a further expansion of the institution's mission.

During the past decade, Notreal College went through a number of leadership changes – four presidents in the past ten years. As a result of the instability in the CEO position, several efforts were undertaken to formally review the College's current mission that had been adopted at the time of the institution's last comprehensive evaluation, but none were successfully concluded. In February 2019, Dr. I.M. Curtius was appointed the tenth president of Notreal College. Soon after his arrival, he began an inclusive process involving trustees, faculty, staff, students, and alumni to

revisit the College's mission as the first step in the development of the institution's next five-year strategic plan (2024-2029), *Notreal College: 150 Years Young*.

Extensive and lively debate among all campus constituencies took place over the next ten months, centered on whether or not the College should focus its academic programming in a particular area or field to create a specific market niche. Some made the case for the College to keep true to its roots in business, programs that were facing increased competition from neighboring institutions; others argued for the development of additional healthcare programs to build on the reputation of its strong nursing program that was among the fastest growing at Notreal. Most agreed that, regardless of the path selected, a strong liberal arts and sciences core should remain at the center of all programs. All agreed that, regardless of the path selected, enrollment growth would be essential to ensure Notreal's financial viability given its continued dependence on tuition and fees in the foreseeable future.

While not reaching total consensus, a revised mission statement was approved by the faculty, administration, and Board of Trustees in December 2019. The new mission statement stresses that Notreal College is committed to offering programs that integrate the liberal arts and sciences with preparation for healthcare and related careers with an educational experience appropriate for "our rapidly changing and pluralistic world." In addition to a new mission statement, the Board of Trustees approved an accompanying commentary of seven educational goals that confirmed the desired outcomes of a Notreal College education. These include the ability to think critically and creatively, to communicate effectively, to interact with others in a competent and effective manner, to understand and employ multiple perspectives, to use interdisciplinary skills, to make informed and ethical personal and professional choices, and to lead and serve in the larger community.

The new mission statement and commentary are well written and give both philosophical grounding and clear direction for planning and resource allocation. The decision to emphasize professional healthcare programs has already begun to pay dividends in improved enrollment and finances. Also, the strategic plan being finalized flows from and is consistent with the mission statement.

The process of mission re-examination in 2019 was judged useful by the campus community; it is next scheduled for formal review and re-examination in 2024. At the same time, even while the College is now engaged in the process of building capacity to support its healthcare focus by hiring new faculty and acquiring resources, work remains to be done to build acceptance of the new mission, particularly among those who would have preferred Notreal to retain its historical emphasis on business. If not tended to, as the team heard in its discussions with faculty, staff, and trustees, the institution will not realize the advantage that would result from having the full commitment of the community to accomplishing its mission and purposes.

## 2. *Planning and Evaluation*

Based on the self-study, and confirmed through meetings with the campus community and a review of the exhibits provided by the College, the team finds that for the past ten years Notreal College's planning and evaluation efforts have been regular, but short-lived due to turnover at the senior leadership level. While trustees, faculty, staff, and students have all committed impressive amounts of time to evaluation and planning processes, the institution has yet to fully implement a long-term plan and to assess its success in achieving strategic goals set for Notreal College. The team is optimistic, however, that the progress made by the institution over the past two years to adopt the College's revised mission and develop a sound and achievable strategic plan for the next five years – *Notreal College: 150 Years Young* – will result in a blueprint against which its accomplishments can be evaluated.

**Planning:** The results of the current planning effort involved the development of transition plans so that the College's programs will in the future become more focused on healthcare-related fields.

Notreal anticipates that its move toward program specialization will impact its resource allocation, campus master plan, finances, and enrollment management efforts. Together, the work done by the various departments to create transition plans has led to the emergence of a realistic and comprehensive strategic plan. Currently in draft form, *Notreal College: 150 Years Young*, is under serious consideration by every constituency of the College – the board, senior staff, professional staff, faculty, and students. By prioritizing the selected strategies into short-term (1-2 years) and longer-term (3-5 years) initiatives, it is anticipated that the strategic plan will serve as a basis for decision making, action, and evaluation, thereby enabling the College to evaluate its effectiveness in planning and insure the flexibility of the institution to respond to circumstances facing the College in the coming years.

The team's meetings with senior administration and the board confirmed the institution's realistic approach to planning in a time of economic and demographic challenges for the College, and its consideration of external and internal realities including labor market analytics. For example, X. Plore Consultants was engaged to conduct a market research study to determine projected job opportunities and potential student interest in additional program offerings in the healthcare field, including an on-line version of the College's popular RN-BSN program.

Unlike some of the previous planning efforts, the current process intentionally utilized the existing governance structure of the College. For example, when the strategic planning process of the College was first initiated, a steering committee of the Board was formed whose membership included representatives from the trustees, senior and professional staff, and faculty. All existing committees of the College were asked to develop strategies related to their areas that would effectively accomplish the mission and goals of the College. These strategies were reviewed by the steering committee and returned to the appropriate areas for refinement and further discussion. Areas which were of institutional interest, such as: online education; facilities; and technology, were assigned to task forces with college-wide membership. Consolidation of the critical elements of this material resulted in the draft summary of the strategic plan that is currently being discussed throughout the Notreal community. These discussions include students, alumni, and local community groups and employers who work with the College.

Prior to formal approval, expected at the December board meeting, the trustees will also consider preliminary budget projections assigned to each major element of the plan. This early blending of financial considerations as the College prepares to commit to strategic initiatives was identified as a "lesson learned" from the last strategic plan, which had a more delayed integration of financial realities with institutional aspirations.

**Evaluation:** The current strategic planning cycle has whetted the institution's appetite for more timely and useful data on which to base its future plans, and the College's Office of Institutional Research has been helpful in this regard. This office took the lead in assessing the information reflected in the Data Dashboards, and the director met with the writing committee for each Standard to assist in the analysis and interpretation of the data.

As the College has been moving forward on its strategic planning, systematic and routine processes for ongoing assessment and evaluation have also emerged. As part of its work, the strategic planning steering committee took the lead to develop a "College-wide Assessment Program" (CAP). The proposed system, which has been incorporated into the strategic plan, would establish a five-year program review cycle for every area of the College. Institutional goals established for the reviews include developing a process to systematically collect feedback from students and alumni and creating advisory panels to bring an external perspective. A pilot CAP review being conducted by the Information Technology department is underway and the results will be reviewed by the strategic planning steering committee at the end of the academic year.

As the College moves forward with its "College-wide Assessment Program," it will be useful to consider the means to evaluate its effectiveness on goals that are not program-specific, for example

the extent to which students are prepared to “interact with others in a competent and effective manner,” a goal stressed by some – but not all – academic programs and by the Office of Student Life.

The team was impressed with the recent initiatives on campus and in individual departments to ensure the College’s planning and evaluation efforts become more routine and comprehensive. A structure is in place to assess achievement of the strategic goals prioritized in the proposed five-year plan.

### *3. Organization and Governance*

Notreal College has a straightforward organization and governance structure appropriate to the institution that facilitates activities directed toward the accomplishment of the institution’s mission and purposes. Lines of authority, responsibility, and communication are clear and reflected in the handbooks for the trustees, staff, faculty, and students.

The College’s culture supports a strong tradition of communication and involvement across the institution, although having four presidents in the past decade has strained the level of trust and collegiality Notreal has historically enjoyed. As learned from the recent process to adopt Notreal’s current mission, finding an appropriate balance between the “consideration of relevant perspectives” and taking “timely action on institutional plans” can be challenging when the right expectations are not established and consensus is not achievable. The team therefore commends the recent steps take to repair internal communications at Notreal. In particular, the monthly meetings being conducted by the Vice President of Academic Affairs with the faculty to discuss the impact of the current higher education landscape on the college have been productive and well received. Topics have included the rising cost of higher education and the growing demand for external accountability.

**Governing Board:** As a group, members of the Board of Trustees share a deep commitment to the mission and purposes of the College and are aware of their legal and oversight responsibilities. All board members are required to complete a Conflict of Interest statement on an annual basis. Of the fifteen board members, only one (not the Chair) has a financial interest in Notreal College resulting from the contract awarded for a portion of the renovation of the Vanguard Science building. As a group, the trustees are very generous to the College as evidenced by their 100% participation in the College’s annual fund.

Of necessity, the Board’s primary attention over the past several years has been on the selection and hiring of a succession of presidents for Notreal College. In its meeting with trustees, the team heard both a frustration in their inability to secure stable leadership for the institution as a result of unanticipated departures primarily due to personal (not institutional) reasons, and also confidence that the current president is committed to seeing Notreal through the development and implementation of its strategic plan and celebration of its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2029. There was recognition by the trustees that the Board had become overly involved in the internal operations of the College as a result of the turnover in presidents, and that moving forward it would need to step back to assume a more appropriate oversight role.

A review of meeting minutes confirmed that the Board fulfills its responsibility to understand the mission and purpose of the College, establish institutional policies, and ensure adequate risk management and regulatory compliance. When the College began to struggle with meeting its enrollment targets as a result of increased competition from other institutions in what were its most popular programs in business, the Board demonstrated awareness of its responsibility to assure Notreal’s fiscal solvency by establishing a new committee comprised of trustees, the Vice President of Academic Affairs, and faculty representatives to explore new opportunities for enrollment growth. One outcome was the institution’s first foray into the healthcare arena with the development of baccalaureate programs in nursing and health and fitness studies in 2019.

As part of the self-study process, the trustees engaged in a self-assessment from which a committee will plan a program of board development. A few areas of concern noted by the team were that the Board lacked a formal orientation for new trustees, a succession plan to replace outgoing Board members.

**Internal Governance:** The senior staff members of Notreal, most of whom have been with the College for five or more years, are committed to its mission and purposes. As a group, they have been able to manage the day-to-day activities during the periods of instability that accompanied the four presidential transitions. The team structure reflects the talents and capabilities of the individuals as well as the needs of the institution.

The Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA), the College's chief academic officer, reports directly to the president and works with a variety of faculty committees, culminating in the Faculty Council, to oversee the quality of the academic program. The Faculty Council approved the College's plans to open its first off-site program at the Suburban Health Center. As a result of the self-study, the Council has identified the need to ensure that the quality of the academic program and services for students at that site is periodically assessed.

As part of the transition to implement Notreal's new mission, the College's academic departments were reorganized into three schools: Nursing and Health Professions; Business and Management; and Liberal Arts and Sciences. Each school is led by a Dean who reports to the VPAA. The Deans' Council meets weekly to discuss issues of common interest and to identify ways the schools can work together on the development of joint programs and on the allocation of academic resources. One such program currently being designed is an interdisciplinary major in public health involving the faculty of all three schools. Other structures to facilitate cross-school communication, particularly among the faculty, are under consideration, as is a formal process to assess the effectiveness of the new academic structure in three years.

Faculty are aware of their responsibilities in relation to curriculum, instruction, and ensuring the quality and integrity of the academic program. Even while the current structure of standing committees (functional) and task forces (ad hoc) is under review to align with the new three-school model, faculty have been able to manage their work efficiently. The Faculty Handbook is in need of revision to reflect the evolution of the organization and governance structures that have been and are emerging in response to the College's newly adopted mission. Plans to address this in the coming year were confirmed by the team.

The Staff Handbook, available online, is clear and concise. It contains the College Mission Statement and policies and procedures appropriate to College personnel. Recent efforts to increase staff communication across organizational lines included a staff development program during which they learn from their peers about the operating concerns of different units. Staff are using the results of the program to make improvements.

The Student Handbook available on the institution's website contains all appropriate procedures and policies related to college life at Notreal. A redesign of the student government structure in light of new mission and three-school model was accomplished in a cooperative spirit with students and college personnel. Its structure allows for active – and equal – student participation in problem solving and leadership in effecting the College's total environment. Students serve on major College committees, meet with the senior staff once a month, and are represented at Board of Trustee meetings.

#### *4. The Academic Program*

**Introduction:** Since 1975, Notreal College has offered associate and baccalaureate degrees in four business-related fields (accounting, financial planning, management, and communication). Struggling to meet its enrollment goals as a result of increased competition particularly from schools offering similar programs online, in 2016 Notreal received approval from the Commission to expand its mission by adding two healthcare baccalaureate degree options (nursing and health and fitness studies). The largest majors at the time of the team’s visit were nursing and sports management. Notreal also offers two small part-time master’s degrees in management and communication.

Based on a review of the program goals and requirements found in the College’s catalog, as well as selected syllabi, the team found Notreal’s academic programs to be generally clear and coherent, with standards of achievement appropriate to the degrees awarded (i.e., associates, baccalaureate, master’s) and well within the best traditions of academic programs in the respective areas. The College’s baccalaureate nursing program is accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN).

**Assuring Academic Quality:** Through departmental structures, the Curriculum Committee, and the Faculty Council, faculty exercise a strong voice in ensuring the academic quality of Notreal’s programs – undergraduate and graduate; on campus and online; in Mount Hope and at the Suburban Health Center. All three Schools – Nursing and Health Professions, Business and Management, and Liberal Arts and Sciences – are represented on both the Curriculum Committee and the Faculty Council.

Even during the transition to the College’s new mission, these structures have been utilized to ensure an effective system of academic oversight and planning. For example, Notreal faculty have been engaged in discussions – sometimes contentious – about whether the business degree programs should be redesigned to emphasize the College’s focus on healthcare. The Faculty Council this past year approved plans developed by the Curriculum Committee to first assess student interest by developing cross-school minors in healthcare management and communication for healthcare professionals. In addition, specialized courses such as healthcare accounting and Spanish for health professionals are in the pipeline for approval by the Faculty Council.

The College’s review of its E-series data forms as part of the self-study process confirmed the widely-held belief that the previous system of academic program review had become too routine and therefore not productive in terms of promoting quality improvement. Under the “College-wide Assessment Program” (CAP), academic program reviews will in the future more explicitly incorporate information obtained from the assessment of student learning and indicators of student success. During the current year, the departments of financial planning and psychology are piloting the enhanced academic program review process. Also under development as part of CAP, for implementation in the next academic year, is a system for tracking the success of the College’s graduates one year, three years, and five years after graduation. (Assessment and student success will be discussed more fully in Standard 8: *Educational Effectiveness*.)

**Undergraduate Degree Programs / Major or Concentration:** Notreal’s undergraduate programs prepare students for successful careers in healthcare and business-related field and include a broad-based education in the liberal arts and sciences. With a focus on developing career skills and knowledge, the College’s associate and baccalaureate programs balance theory and practice and provide opportunities for active learning and leadership development. The School of Nursing and Health Professions offers a major in nursing, and three majors in health and fitness studies (sports management, exercise science, and nutrition); the School of Business and Management offers five majors (accounting; financial planning; management; organizational systems; and communication). The School of Liberal Arts and Sciences does not offer a major.

A clear pre-requisite system ensures students have in-depth study at the advanced undergraduate level. Learning goals and syllabi reflect a strong commitment to students’ development of skills



in information literacy and technology. Students in all undergraduate programs have at least nine credits of unrestricted electives.

Notreal College has one off-site instructional location, the Suburban Health Center where its nursing program, RN-GSN, is offered. The faculty in the program are a combination of regular Notreal College faculty and clinical instructors from the Suburban Health Center and other medical facilities in the area. The overall academic oversight of the program is provided by the Chair of the Nursing Department who includes matters concerning the program in all regular reports to the Dean of the School of Nursing and Health Professions. The team found that the students in the program felt well served. However, while students at the site are provided with training on using library and information resources, it was not clear that they were using these resources at a level commensurate with their on-campus peers in the same courses.

Sizable student interest in the surrounding rural communities for on-line programs in health-related fields, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, was one of the findings of the market study conducted by X. Plore Consultants, and the College received approval from the Commission to offer an on-line version of its highly enrolled RN-BSN program. Three other programs are also now close to offering 50% of the coursework online – management, sports management, and organizational systems. – In 2021 Notreal received general approval from the Commission to offer distance learning programs. Notreal uses a system of secure logins and pedagogical approaches to verify students' identities.

As with the RN-BSN program offered at the Suburban Health Center, the Notreal Nursing Department closely monitors the performance of students completing the online version of the program. To compare the performance of the three almost unique RN-BSN student populations, standardized questions are incorporated into exams to compare the achievement of learning outcomes across delivery formats. To date, no significant differences have been found.

Notreal College established a dual enrollment program with the local Achiever High School in Mount Hope in 2015. Typically 3-5 courses, selected in consultation with the high school principal by the VPAA who oversees the program, are offered each semester. The courses are taught by Achiever High School faculty who are selected, supervised and evaluated by the appropriate department chair at Notreal College. Each high school faculty member is visited at least once a semester by the Notreal department chair. To ensure student success, enrollment to date has been limited to high school students with a 3.0 GPA and the permission of the high school principal. As a result, enrollment has been less than 15 students per course which may grow as the dual enrollment program gains visibility within the state.

During its visit, the team also learned that Notreal College is exploring the possibility of developing a competency-based version of its bachelor's degree in communication that would permit students to accelerate their learning by receiving credit for courses after they demonstrate mastery of the course competencies by passing a summative assessment. To determine whether the institution has the capacity to undertake such an initiative, a task force, led by the chair of the communication department, has been established to learn more about how offering such a program would impact not only the department, but potentially also the institution. A field trip for communication faculty and other academic administrators has been arranged to visit another institution in the region that is a pioneer in successfully offering competency-based programs.

**General Education:** All of the College's baccalaureate programs share a 41-credit required Foundational Studies (i.e., general education) curriculum which represents slightly over a third of their total course of study at Notreal College. (Notreal associate degrees require 21 credits in general education coursework.) Guided by the College's statement of an educated person, the Foundational Studies program, most recently reviewed in 2017, moved to offering students a much more restricted menu of options to (1) guarantee students are exposed to the main areas of

intellectual inquiry, and (2) include an innovative sequence of interdisciplinary courses based on broad themes. The College believes that these changes to the Foundational Studies program have addressed the Commission's request following its interim report to "give emphasis to...success in fully implementing the Foundational Studies curriculum with particular reference to its depth and coherence."

Student learning in the Foundational Studies (FS) program is assessed using a senior-level FS capstone course that allows students to systematically demonstrate their mastery of the institution's general education outcomes. The Dean of Arts and Sciences, who has overall responsibility for the FS program, reported that department chairs and advisory committee members review FS capstone results during an annual retreat in May and make adjustments to the program as warranted. An ongoing discussion of the group, brought about by a comparison of the capstone performance of healthcare students with that of business students, centered on whether separate sections of some FS courses should be offered to provide more relevant career-related examples. The mathematics department has offered to experiment with the concept by developing parallel quantitative reasoning courses, one for students in the School of Nursing and Health Professions and another for students in the School of Business and Management. Faculty appear to be divided on the idea of "separate but equal" courses but were persuaded to see if the suggested pilot in mathematics resulted in improving students' quantitative performance.

Notreal librarians work with faculty to provide a program developing information literacy skills throughout the curriculum, including for nursing students studying online and at the off-campus nursing site. Information literacy is listed as one of the anticipated learning outcomes of the FS program, but as of yet there is no concrete plan to assess how well students are developing these skills. Three faculty members and a librarian are working together, supported by a small grant from the VPAA's office, to incorporate information literacy assessment mechanisms into the FS capstone course.

One area of concern identified by the visiting team was the use of internships/clinicals, an academic requirement common to all of the College's career-oriented programs. There is credible anecdotal evidence that Notreal students find these internships/clinicals helpful to tie academic learning to the real world as they plan their own careers. To date, each department has developed its own policies and practices related to internships/clinicals, and the team therefore suggests that it would be useful to look more systematically at ensuring reasonable consistency across programs, as well as developing a plan to gather and consider the effectiveness of internships/clinicals in the various academic areas. This focus on internships/clinicals would also provide an opportunity for the College to consider how experiential learning can be incorporated into the College's system of assessment.

**Graduate Degree Programs:** As noted above, Notreal College offers two part-time graduate degree programs – in management and communication. Based on a review of course syllabi and meetings with graduate students, faculty teaching in the programs, and representatives from the advisory boards, the team confirmed that learning outcomes in each of the two programs reflect a higher level of complexity than do the College's undergraduate programs in the same areas. Both programs require 30 credit hours of coursework and successful completion of an Applied Research Project structured to examine an issue of importance in a professional setting that allows a student to document achievement of program objectives. During their final semester, students are required to present their projects to the program's advisory committee comprised of local professionals in the field who are very committed to ensuring the quality of the Notreal graduate experience.

A primary feeder of Notreal's graduate programs has been its affiliation with Mass Media, Inc. (MMI) also headquartered in Mount Hope, a contractual arrangement approved by the Commission as part of the College's substantive change program to offer its first graduate degree programs. Employees of MMI can earn up to 6 graduate credits through Notreal by completing MMI's intensive four-week summer institute on crisis management. Approved by the College's

Faculty Council, a joint Notreal-MMI Committee consisting of Notreal faculty and MMI instructors provides oversight of the arrangement. The committee meets each spring semester to review the content to be offered in the upcoming summer program, the credentials of the instructors proposed to teach the seminar modules, as well as the applications of the students who have applied to attend. Notreal faculty also participate in the end-of-summer symposium organized by MMI to showcase student projects. Typically, 25-30 students enroll in MMI's crisis management summer program, with four or five electing to continue their studies by enrolling in one of Notreal's graduate programs.

Even given its contractual arrangement with MMI, enrollment in both graduate programs is small, with current intakes of 8-10 new students each year. Since being launched in the early 2000's, the size of the two campus-based programs has declined every year as, according to the College in its self-study, students attracted to part-time graduate study more and more choose online programs that provide a more convenient option. As a result, the feasibility of continuing the two programs is being reviewed by the Faculty Council. Other ideas being considered to increase enrollment are putting more emphasis on the College's 4+1 option when students first enter the College and working more closely with other local businesses to determine whether, similar to the College's arrangement with MMI, it might be possible to award up to 6 graduate credits for prior learning experience based on faculty evaluation of student constructed competency-based portfolios.

At the same time, in response to the findings of the market study conducted by X. Plore Consultants and supportive of its new mission to focus on the development of healthcare programs, Notreal College included in its Strategic Plan a long-term initiative to develop and offer a range of graduate programs for healthcare professionals. The School of Nursing and Health Professions has established an ad hoc committee to design the initial program, a master's degree in nursing leadership that would also take advantage of faculty expertise in Notreal's School of Business and Management. At the time of the team visit, the committee was reviewing the requirements of similar programs offered by peer institutions with an eye to the increased expectations for student achievement at the master's level. The College understands that this move will also require Commission approval as the institution does not yet have general approval at the master's level, a status it plans to request.

**Integrity in the Award of Academic and Transfer Credit:** Given Notreal's program offerings, the College's current policy on the award of credit addresses traditional classroom-based instruction at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, and also online courses. To earn one academic credit, students need to complete the equivalent of one hour of direct faculty instruction and two hours of out-of-class work over the College's fifteen-week semester. In discussions with Notreal faculty, they demonstrated an understanding of the College's policy for credit award and how it related to their courses; the College's course approval process specifically includes a review of the credit assigned to a course by both the Curriculum Committee and the Vice President of Academic Affairs.

The team's review of course schedules and syllabi for a cross-section of Notreal's course offerings, including classroom and online courses, as well as courses offered in a condensed weekend or intersession/summer format, found the assignment of credit reflective of the College's policy. Several examples of courses being offered in different formats confirmed consistent learning outcomes and expected student achievement across all formats. For courses at different levels in the same discipline, sample syllabi showed evidence of progressively complex and specialized student work.

The College enrolls about 25 transfer students per year; it also considers transfer credits for students wishing to take summer courses closer to home. As part of the self-study, a sub-committee of *The Academic Program* standard working group tasked with writing the section on

Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit reviewed both the Commission's Standards and the Federal Regulations Relating to Title IV in this area. Two concerns were identified: the evaluation of transfer credits was done without appropriate academic involvement, and a list of existing articulation agreements was not available on the College's website. As a result, the responsibility for transfer credits will in the future rest with the departments. In addition, the College's statement on its website explaining the criteria for transfer of credit was updated and a list of the current articulation agreements Notreal has with several local community colleges was added.

## 5. Students

**Admissions:** Since its last comprehensive evaluation, Notreal College has struggled to maintain its desired full-time undergraduate enrollment of 1,500 that it had enjoyed in the late 1990's and into the early 2000's. As explained by the institution in its self-study, the College's professional undergraduate programs in business and management have faced increased competition not only from neighboring institutions, particularly nearby Mount Hope State University, but also from the multitude of online programs now available in business-related fields. Enrollment reached a low of 1,150 full-time baccalaureate students and 48 associate students in Fall 2015.

In response, Notreal added two part-time graduate programs and developed a contractual relationship with Mass Media, Inc. as a way to attract students to its master's programs in management and communication. To date, however, enrollment in both programs has remained small, totaling less than 50 students (20 FTEs).

To further stem the decline in undergraduate enrollment, Notreal College moved forward in 2016 to add nursing and health and fitness studies programs to its academic portfolio after receiving approval from the Commission. The plan, pushed by the then president who came from an institution on the west coast that had successfully pursued a similar strategy, was fully approved by the Board who committed substantial resources to ensure the success of the new programs. Notreal also received generous financial support from one of the College's major donors who agreed to fund the renovation of the Vanguard Science building to accommodate the planned healthcare-related programs and also the equipment required to furnish state-of-the-art laboratory spaces. The proposal received the support of the faculty, but only by a slim majority. Since the four healthcare majors were launched, enrollment at Notreal has rebounded, climbing to 1,285 full-time baccalaureate and 63 associate degree students this past fall.

Among other actions taken over the past five years related to admissions were the following: the creation of the position of Vice President for Enrollment Management (VPEM); the placement of financial aid under the leadership of the VPEM; and the hiring of a dedicated admission counselor to assist students interested in the College's online and off-campus RN-BSN programs.

Notreal annually targets an incoming undergraduate class of 400. For Fall 2022, it received 3,212 applications, accepted 2,730 (85% acceptance rate), and 392 enrolled (14% yield rate). While coming close to meeting its goal for Fall 2022, the VPEM is nonetheless concerned about the low yield rate, particularly because it varies by school with students expressing interest in the College's nursing program more likely to enroll than those accepted into a business-related program. As a result, active outreach to all applicants has been initiated with personal calls from the deans and faculty to each potential student a key part of the program.

Notreal College takes a holistic approach to undergraduate admissions, individually evaluating the credentials of each candidate including high school academic performance and leadership potential as demonstrated by participation in co-curricular activities. Overall, the team found evidence that the College admits and enrolls students generally qualified to do the academic work and provides appropriate support where needed. Since its launch, admission into the College's nursing program

has become increasingly competitive. A limited number who meet certain criteria (e.g., four years of high school science with a B or better grade point average) can be directly accepted into the major as first-year students; other students interested in the major are admitted to the College and are then evaluated for admission to the program after three semesters of coursework at Notreal with a 3.0 GPA or better.

A total of 92% of the undergraduate students who enroll in Notreal College receive some type of financial aid. Notreal offers a mandatory information session for all students (and potential students) about the implications of borrowing to finance a college education prior to their meeting with a financial aid officer. These sessions are conducted in small groups as needed. The average debt for Notreal baccalaureate graduates is \$27,166, less than the College's annual tuition rate of \$28,500.

Less successful has been the College's work in recruiting and retaining students of color. Indeed, the overall percentage of students of color has increased only from 2.3% to 3.4% over the past five years. While the College articulates commitment in this area in its general and admissions planning, it has not yet developed a focused set of activities that leads to success in this area. The VPED indicates this area is a priority for next year's planning and it will involve increased use of the College's strategic alliances with historically Black and Hispanic-serving colleges.

Another strategy used by the College to increase undergraduate enrollment was to increase the discount rate to 55%, a rate higher than the College's peers. The team was encouraged to learn that the Board has called for a review of this financial aid strategy, with the aim of lowering the discount rate but ensuring that available institutional financial aid is used to meet institutional priorities consistent with its new mission.

Applicants to the College's part-time graduate program must submit official transcripts of all previous academic work attempted, a résumé and personal statement describing their goals, and one letter of recommendation from a previous professor or supervisor. These materials are reviewed by the director of the program who may, in certain cases, require a personal interview prior to admission. These same requirements hold for Mass Media, Inc. participants who go on to enroll in one of Notreal's graduate programs.

**Student Services and Co-Curricular Experiences:** At Notreal College, Student Services has been very much involved as a participant, planner, and implementer in the changes and evolution of the College. Led by a Vice President of Student Affairs and Dean of Students who reports to the president, student services staff endeavor to provide an environment dedicated to students realizing their full potential – both at the undergraduate and graduate levels, whether on-campus or online.

Notreal's student development philosophy is shared and implemented by a team of able professionals who provide great commitment and skills to attaining the College's mission and objectives. The College's ambitious goal of integrating the curriculum and co-curriculum to reinforce student learning is critical to Notreal's future growth and success. In recent years, Notreal College has taken steps to emerge as a unique, dynamic, and effective learning community. For example, faculty members have become more involved in co-curricular activities; a faculty and student affairs staff team is involved with the First-Year Seminar; student affairs professionals are invited to participate in faculty development workshops; faculty advise the Student Government Association; both constituencies are active members on committees and task forces; and both the undergraduate and graduate orientations are co-led by the Associate VPAA and the Dean of Student Development.

At the operational level, Student Services offers all of the standard services and programs expected at a college of its size and character, including intercollegiate and intramural athletics programs, residence life programs, health and counseling services, and orientation programs. An online

orientation for RN-BSN students was implemented this past year that includes an introduction to those on-campus services that can be accessed online, e.g., financial aid, tutoring and writing center support. The Student Government Association, that was recently restructured to ensure representation of the College's undergraduate and graduate students in business and healthcare, is presently a strong force on campus. The judicial system was reviewed and a Community Council created that is functioning well for disciplinary matters that arise. The Student Services division also coordinates programs and services for students with disabilities.

The team found the services provided by Notreal's Career Services Office, available to all of the College's students both on-campus and online, particularly noteworthy. With a mission to assist students in making connections between their academic experience and career paths, the office provides career-related counseling, resources and programs to help students establish career plans, develop job-search skills, and make successful career transitions. Over the years, it has developed relationships with alumni and local employers to optimize internship, job and career opportunities in the area of business, and has more recently begun to forge similar connections with healthcare and health and fitness organizations. One measure of its success, based on the findings of the annual graduate survey administered by the office, is that 72% of the Class of 2022 had professional jobs in their fields of study one year out from graduation. The survey, administered one year post graduation, regularly has an 80% response rate and Career Services staff personally reach out to non-responds via Linked-in and email.

While a satisfaction survey is distributed at the end of each year in the residence hall, and students are asked to evaluate the orientation program, no evidence was provided that the results of these assessments are used in any systematic way to improve the programs and services offered. As part of the College's "College-wide Assessment Program" initiative, a comprehensive approach to assessing the effectiveness of Notreal's student services will be developed.

#### *6. Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship*

**Faculty and Academic Staff:** Notreal College had a faculty of 42 full-time faculty as of the current fall semester. Of this total, 18 are in the School of Business and Management, 14 are in the School of Nursing and Health Professions, and 10 are in the School of Liberal Arts and Sciences. In addition, Notreal's employs 86 part-time/adjunct faculty across all three schools to ensure students have exposure to working professionals in their fields of study. This group includes accountants, bankers, and local business owners, as well as nurse practitioners and other clinicians who are practicing health professionals, all of whom hold appropriate academic credentials. Given the nature and size of its programs, Notreal does not use any teaching assistants.

By all accounts, the faculty are generally dedicated and hardworking; the College prides itself on the close relationship between faculty and students. As reflected in the Data Dashboards, half of the full-time faculty, primarily in the School of Business and Management, have more than 10 years of service at Notreal College. During the period from 2012 to 2022, the percentage of faculty members who are tenured dropped from 78% to 32% due to the addition of new faculty in nursing and health and fitness studies. Of the 42 full-time faculty, 22 or 52% have earned doctorates or the appropriate terminal degree in their fields, and the balance hold masters' degrees. Those holding the rank of full professor total 8, associate professor 13, assistant professor 13, and clinical instructor 8; 24 are men and 18 are women.

Four types of faculty contracts are offered at Notreal College: term contracts, probationary contracts, rolling contracts, and continuous contracts. Term contracts are given to part-time and special appointment faculty. Probationary contracts are given, on a renewable basis, to ranked faculty members when initially appointed, and these faculty members may apply for a three-year rolling contract in their sixth year of service. Continuous contracts are given to faculty members who have attained tenured status. Evaluation of junior faculty occurs each year with self-assessment reports, student evaluations, and department chair evaluations. More extensive

evaluations occur in the third and fifth years, including peer review. However, a post-tenure review of senior faculty as described in the Faculty Handbook is not generally practiced. Part-time faculty are evaluated by department chairs.

The faculty members of Notreal College are committed first and foremost to the teaching and learning of their students and they were instrumental in determining the seven educational outcomes of a Notreal College education approved by the Board. Teaching is the primary focus for the faculty and a full-time teaching load consists of 24 credit hours per year. Even given the addition of healthcare-related programs, the faculty-student ratio has remained at 18:1 demonstrating the College's success in hiring a sufficient number of faculty to support the new majors. In the Fall of 2023, 72% of all classes were taught by full-time faculty, with the graduate programs in particular relying on adjunct faculty with appropriate professional backgrounds to teach certain specialty courses. Along with teaching, academic advising is also a high priority, and most full-time faculty serve on at least two College committees.

Working alongside the faculty, Notreal has a well-qualified team of librarians, advisors, and other academic staff. The Wella Kome Library/Learning Center is led by two full-time librarians (both of whom hold MLS degrees), one part-time librarian, clerical staff, and student workers. Review survey data obtained in the electronic workroom suggests that library staff are consulted frequently, both in person and "virtually." The College's Academic Success Center, staffed by three professional advisors all of whom hold master's degrees, is organized by class – one advisor responsible for assisting first-year students, one assigned to work with second-year students, and one for both juniors and seniors when students transfer to faculty advisors in their major areas. Both the Writing Center coordinated by a member of the English department that is heavily used by undergraduate as well as graduate students, and the Peer Tutoring Program led by the Assistant VPAA that can be accessed on campus and electronically, are also part of the Academic Success Center. In addition, an instructional designer (M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction) supports Notreal's faculty teaching online with developing and supporting their courses.

Based on the number of unprompted remarks made by students with whom the team met, the College's academic staff get high marks for participating in College activities and more generally for being available to them. They serve on appropriate committees and lend their expertise to enriching the academic experience of Notreal students.

In its self-study, the College focused on a number of specific issues related to the faculty and academic staff including the following:

Salaries: As documented in the self-study, considerable improvement in salaries has occurred since 2017 with total increases of approximately 8% in constant dollars, placing the College just below the midpoint for its identified group of peers. Adjunct faculty per-course rates were also raised to be more reflective of those offered by other colleges in and around Mount Hope. The Board continues to review the institution's financial capacity to provide the College's faculty and staff with salaries and benefits comparable to those offered by peer institutions.

Professional Development: After a period of several years characterized by much less spending for professional projects, an endowment created by three major gifts now ensures a continuous fund for the future development of the College's faculty and academic staff. In FY2021, \$75,000 in faculty/staff professional development funds was made possible from the interest on this endowment. Funds were used to purchase educational resources and to support travel to professional conferences.

Teaching Assignments: Twenty-four credit hours per year is the normal full-time teaching assignment with three credits of release time for department chairs. The increased focus on student internships for the College's business and management students and the time involved with supervising clinicals required as part of its nursing and other health-related programs have

prompted a re-evaluation of how to give teaching credit to faculty members involved in these activities.

**Advising:** Due to differences in the number of majors per department (and per full-time faculty members within departments), the number of advisees per faculty member varies greatly: some faculty have up to 70 advisees, with others having few or no advisees. Because advising is considered “part of load,” there is some concern among the faculty that the policy has the effect of creating very different levels of instructional assignments among the faculty. Ensuring appropriate academic advising coverage for the institution’s online students and those at its off-campus site at the Suburban Health Center has only increased the need to address this issue.

**Teaching and Learning:** Notreal College’s mission as a teaching institution is reflected in the value placed on effective instruction. Academic freedom is fully supported by the institution and is explicitly incorporated into the College’s written policies.

New undergraduate students are required to complete College 101, a course designed to foster student success, development, and transition into and through Notreal. The course is taught by faculty drawn from the School of Liberal Arts and Sciences who serve as first-year advisors for the students in their sections, with two of the sections being taught by advisors from the Academic Success Center who share overall responsibility for the First-Year experience program.

New faculty members are assigned teaching mentors (i.e., more senior faculty members) who are generally regarded as highly effective instructors. The quality of teaching is the most important consideration given in the faculty reappointment process at the institution, and teaching is regularly evaluated through a number of mechanisms. Through a grant from a regional foundation, Notreal College has recently developed an electronic teaching portfolio that helps faculty document materials about their teaching. Several faculty members noted that the dialogue that was a part of developing the electronic portfolio system provided rich opportunities for faculty development; indeed one of the challenges cited was continuing this constructive and useful dialogue as the portfolio system is implemented and becomes part of the College routine. In response to this faculty feedback, the team was pleased to learn that a number of initiatives were underway, most notably the possible initiation of a Teaching and Learning Center.

At the same time, while there is ample indication that the College benefits from a wide array of engaged and effective teaching faculty members, there has been no systematic way the institution works to improve instruction. Particularly as the institution broadens its instructional offerings to include less traditional formats such as competency-based programs and the award of credit for prior learning that requires an increased focus on the systematic assessment of student learning, it may be timely to consider a more formalized approach to development in this area for both faculty and academic staff. These, too, are areas a Teaching and Learning Center could help to address.

Review of faculty member performance also incorporates an evaluation of “professional activity,” which includes the obligation for faculty members to remain current in their field of endeavor and to work systematically on the quality of their teaching. While the decided emphasis at Notreal College is on teaching rather than on the production of new research, most faculty are active in their professional associations, with 85% having attended one or more professional association meetings within the past two years; 40% (including a majority of the faculty teaching in the College’s graduate programs) have presented a paper or published an article in a professional newsletter or journal within the past three years.

The timing of the self-study was opportune in providing a framework to surface concerns regarding the support of the College’s faculty and academic staff, the sufficiency generally not having been an issue during times of lower enrollment. However, as additional programs in healthcare are developed and launched, ensuring that there are adequate numbers of faculty and academic staff will need to be monitored.



## 7. Institutional Resources

**Human Resources:** Under the leadership of the Director of Human Resources, Notreal College has weathered a period of downsizing in response to enrollment declines and is now engaged in a phase of growth to support the enrollment rebound resulting from the institution's new strategic direction to increase its focus on healthcare-related programs. As learned from the self-study, during the downturn years the non-teaching staff decreased from a high of 182 FTE to 162 FTE, a reduction that was accomplished for the most part through retirements and transitions. With fewer students on campus, particularly hard hit were those units involved with residential life, as well as clerical staff positions. (Adjunct faculty were also impacted as fewer course sections were offered.) Currently, the College's non-teaching staff has returned to a total of 191 FTE with new positions having been created to handle the increased demands associated with offering healthcare programs such as providing support for the laboratories and managing the institution's relationships with regional hospitals to ensure a sufficient number of clinical placements are available for Notreal students.

The College's handbooks for staff and faculty contain the College's personnel policies, and the Human Resources Office maintains a separate document about benefit plans that is reviewed with all new employees during an initial orientation meeting.

Non-teaching staff positions are classified into two groups – Professional and Administrative Support – based on the level of program knowledge, decision making responsibilities, and problem-solving requirements of the position. Every employee receives a letter that sets out the terms of employment, Notreal's staff code of conduct, and a copy of the annual performance evaluation form. In its open meeting with staff, the team learned that the annual evaluation process was not consistently conducted by all departments, and therefore recommends a review and perhaps retraining of supervisors.

As noted in Standard Six: *Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship*, an endowed fund provides opportunities for the professional development of the College's faculty and academic staff, this past year providing a total of \$75,000. In addition, a small fund (\$15,000) is maintained by the Human Resources Office to support professional staff development and the offering of in-house workshops on relevant topics for administrative support staff.

**Financial Resources:** Notreal College is a small, tuition-driven college that is successfully turning around a very precarious financial condition that threatened its viability. During the late 1990's and into the first decade of the 2000's, the College's undergraduate enrollment declined significantly to a low of 1,150 in 2019, with accompanying annual deficits that ranged from \$101,000 to \$895,000. However during the last five years, thanks in large measure to the decision to add programs in nursing and health and fitness studies, enrollment increased and the deficits began to trend down with a net loss of only \$43,000 in the past fiscal year and a balanced budget projected for the current fiscal year.

Not surprisingly, deferred maintenance also increased during this period, reaching \$8 million. As discussed in the next section, since 2017 the Vanguard Science building and the Wella Kome Library/Learning Center have been renovated, and approximately \$4 million has been invested toward deferred maintenance projects including the replacement of old boilers and fuel tanks that reduced the College's annual energy costs by almost \$80,000.

Once the College's 2024-2029 strategic plan has been officially approved by the Board, anticipated in December, a major Capital Campaign is planned with a goal to raise \$25 million to support the development of additional healthcare programs. Several of the College's loyal donors have already discussed making sizable gifts during the silent phase of the campaign that is underway. In addition, the College has a very aggressive and successful Annual Fundraising Campaign which

contributes approximately \$1 million to the College's operating budget. Since FY2018 the Annual Fund has nearly doubled – from \$554,510 to \$1,002,045 in FY2022.

To its credit, Notreal has throughout its history prudently managed its long-term debt which at the end of the current fiscal year will stand at a relatively modest \$5.8 million. In 2018, the College issued \$4 million in tax-exempt bonds through the state's Higher Education and Health Foundation Authority to help finance the renovation of the Vanguard Science building. To date, the College has been able to meet its debt service obligations using operating funds. Notreal also has a \$1 million line of credit secured by tuition receipts that it has not had to use in the past two years.

The College's budget process is "open," and there is a high level of participation in the process by faculty and staff. After the arrival of the current president, the College began a complete reorganization of its business office under the leadership of the Vice President for Administration and Finance. A new controller (CPA) was hired for greater day-to-day financial control and management and the College's long-time audit firm was replaced with N. Balance Accounting. In addition, the Finance Committee of the board has become more active in its oversight responsibilities. This past year the Finance Committee reviewed the procedures management uses to manage risk and ensure regulatory compliance. Currently, however, the College has no contingency fund in its annual operating budget and the Board of Trustees may want to consider mandating the establishment of such a fund.

The institution has hired a consultant to evaluate its financial condition with respect to its peer institutions and those institutions to which it aspires to count as peers. The board is also scheduled in the coming year to review its financial aid policy, particularly considering the high tuition discount rate (55%), the desire to diversify the student body, and, as reported in the self-study, the increased average debt of its graduating students.

Although the College remains in a financially optimistic mood, the national financial and economic picture suggests caution, particularly given Notreal's strategy to become less diversified by concentrating its program offerings in healthcare areas. Enrollment management officers spoke candidly with the team about their uncertainty regarding whether the enrollment increases experienced over the past five years could be sustained in the future, particularly should institutional aid be reduced. Fortunately, the governing board includes a number of financially talented members, and the memory of recent financial troubles at the College serves as a lesson learned.

**Information, Physical, and Technological Resources:** Notreal College has a good overall sense of its needs in the areas of information, physical, and technological resources. Major requirements – including deferred maintenance – are clearly specified and realistically prioritized within existing resources.

Notreal College occupies approximately 80 acres of land and has 26 buildings, most of which were constructed prior to 1960. These buildings total approximately 525,000 square feet, providing more than adequate academic space for current needs as well as anticipated future enrollment growth. The Vanguard Science building and Wella Kome Library/Learning Center, both renovated within the last few years, are the centerpieces to modern campus facilities. In addition, the College offers its nursing program in rented classroom space in Suburban Health Center, a relatively new, state-of-the-art medical facility.

The Wella Kome Library/Learning Center, located within a five-minute walk from any point on campus, is readily accessible to faculty and students. The facility is normally open 87 hours per week and more during final exam periods. The Library/Learning Center has approximately 95,000 books and periodicals. In addition, the College belongs to the New England Library Consortium and subscribes to an increasing number of full-text electronic databases that are also made available to its online students and those at its off-campus site. The acquisitions budget has been

level funded for the past three years, but the College anticipates a 4% increase for the next academic year.

Teaching spaces are generally satisfactory for the subject matter taught. Currently, around 90% of the general classrooms are technology classrooms; the VPAA's goal is to increase this to 100% in the next year. Approximately \$2 million provided by a major donor was invested to renovate the Vanguard Science building to accommodate the nursing program, and another \$500,000 used to furnish state-of-the-art laboratory spaces.

The College has a robust course management system and nearly 90% of the full-time faculty and 75% of the part-time faculty put it to good use. The College sees proficiency in online learning an important skill in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and, as noted elsewhere in this report, online courses are now available in most majors and a fully online RN-BSN program is offered.

The College provides sufficient resources to support the design and implementation of a regular program of technology and software upgrades and replacements in administrative offices and for the faculty. Notreal also maintains two computer labs for students use – one in the library/learning center and one in the main classroom building – each with 25 workstations. In addition, a secure wireless network is available campus wide and the bandwidth was recently expanded to accommodate the increased number of devices students now use.

In the administrative area, the College has recently completed the installation of a new integrated software system that has already proven valuable in providing information on students, employees, and finances. The team was also provided with copies of the institution's policies that address permissible use of its systems, data security, and disaster planning and recovery.

As noted above, deferred maintenance, which now stands at \$8 million, remains a significant challenge. The College has been working diligently to address deficiencies, recently allocating approximately \$4 million toward deferred maintenance projects. Also planned is a major upgrade of Notreal's residence halls converting them into suite-style living units with the goal of achieving LEED certification in recognition of the College's efforts to minimize the environmental impact of its campus. The College's comprehensive Campus Master Plan is currently being reviewed by the Building and Campus Planning Committee of the Board of Trustees to determine what, if any changes need to be made to ensure it is well synchronized with the institution's 2024-2029 strategic plan, *Notreal College: 150 Years Young*, and that it accommodates plans for new healthcare-related programs. It will be considered by the Board at its December meeting.

## 8. *Educational Effectiveness*

The major focus of Notreal College is decidedly on the quality, integrity and effectiveness of its academic programs and the success of its students. As evidenced by the data reported in the *Educational Effectiveness* and E-series (Making Assessment More Explicit) forms, since its interim report Notreal College has made considerable progress to ensure graduates' competence in specified program objectives. The engagement of the faculty and the initiation of the Assessment Committee have brought considerable energy and focus to the College's efforts to understand what and how its students are learning and to be more systematic in looking at measures of student success.

**Standard of Achievement:** To ensure appropriate levels of student achievement for its programs, the College makes use of the standards established by programmatic accreditors and other professional organizations such as the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN), the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND), and the Commission on Sport Management Accreditation (COSMA). The team's review of syllabi and the institution's assessment plan, along with discussions with faculty, deans, and the VPAA, confirmed that Notreal

College has in place standards of achievement appropriate to the degrees it awards. The learning outcomes of programs offered at the baccalaureate level are more rigorous and advanced than those at the associate level; the College's two master's programs in management and communication require more sophisticated and complex outcomes than those of the institution's undergraduate programs offered in the same fields. Confirming evidence was found by comparing the course readings and other assignments reflected on the syllabi of introductory courses (100- and 200-level) with those found on the syllabi of more advanced courses (300- and 400-level), and a review of graduate-level syllabi (500-level).

Assessment: The progress made by the College over the last five years toward development of a systematic approach to the assessment of student learning is noteworthy. Following the interim report, the College developed an Office of Institutional Research (IR). At the same time, the VPAA appointed an Assessment Committee that today is comprised of faculty from all three schools. The Committee was charged with developing and implementing a system of measuring student achievement (1) linked to the process of academic program review (now part of the "College-wide Assessment Program") and (2) focused on generating information useful for improvement. The Director of IR serves as the resource liaison to the Committee which is viewed by its members as being very helpful.

With respect to the E-Series data forms, the College selected the first option based primarily on program review and specialized accreditation. As reflected in the self-study, the E-forms indicate that the College has realistic learning objectives on its website for every major and for general education. As noted above, to ensure an appropriate level of achievement, Notreal studied similar programs offered by peer institutions and the goals established by academic associations.

The College provided modest evidence of program improvements made from its analysis of assessment results. For example, the management program aligned its learning outcomes to goals established by the AACSB, developed rubrics that score students on achievement of these goals, and set a baseline target that 85% of students attain a score of 75% or better. This past year, a finding that only 50% of third-year students were able to adequately apply basic concepts in systems design led to a new requirement for management majors to complete one course in organizational systems as part of their business electives. The nursing program, in response to the high level of course withdrawals in Anatomy and Physiology I, worked with the biology faculty to introduce a two-semester version of the course so that it can serve as a "gateway" rather than a "gatekeeper" course for nursing students.

As described in Standard 4: *The Academic Program*, student learning in the Foundational Studies (FS) program is assessed using a senior-level FS capstone course that allows students to systematically demonstrate their mastery of the institution's general education outcomes. Similarly, both graduate programs require an Applied Research Project that is structured so that students can provide evidence of their achievement of program objectives. In addition, as indicated in the E-series data forms, programs that have licensure exams such as nursing use the results to gauge student achievement. In other departments, the electronic portfolio being developed for faculty has increased interest in having a system of electronic portfolios for students as well. The financial planning and nutrition departments will pilot a portfolio system during the coming academic year using money from a small regional foundation grant.

While assessment is well underway in the majors and general education, less progress has been made in evaluating student achievement of the seven institution-wide learning goals: ability to think critically and creatively, to communicate effectively, to interact with others in a competent and effective manner, to understand and employ multiple perspectives, to use interdisciplinary skills, to make informed and ethical personal and professional choices, and to lead and serve in the larger community. The Assessment Committee has appointed a subgroup to work with the school deans on a strategy for measuring student achievement of these institution-wide goals; their report will be produced in the coming year. This effort, requiring the cooperation and involvement of

student services, will provide an opportunity for the College to advance the institution's goal of more intentionally integrating its curriculum and co-curriculum.

Notreal College has in addition given the NSSE survey for the past five years. However, while the results were circulated internally, they have not been used systematically. Working with the VPAA, the Assessment Committee is planning that next year's Fall Faculty Symposium will focus on "Notreal Students: What We Know," and use the results of NSSE and entering and exiting student surveys as a way to make the data more useful to faculty and the campus community in general. As noted elsewhere, the College is also applying for funds to start a Center for Teaching and Learning which the Assessment Committee sees as a partner in its work.

Retention and Graduation Rates: Notreal College's major strength in supporting student retention is the strong student/faculty relationship of personal caring and individual attention. In addition, the College uses most of the nationally accepted practices for improving retention, including increased academic support services, improving residential facilities and student life areas, conducting regular studies on the College's retention and graduation rates and distributing the results widely, supporting and encouraging an active and involved student government and student clubs, and developing a co-curricular transcript.

Because the College's undergraduate student body includes 80% first-time full-time entering students, the IPEDS data are useful. When compared to national averages, the College does well. Its three-year average baccalaureate retention rate (first-to-second-year) of 79% is significantly above the national average of 67%. (Students who specifically indicate an associate degree as their academic goal are retained at a somewhat lower rate, 60%.) Notreal's average graduation rate for its last three baccalaureate classes, 57%, is also above the national average of 43%. (For associate degree students, the graduation rate is 48%.) Particularly as Notreal begins to offer additional healthcare-related programs, its stated goal is to maintain above average retention and graduation rates. The College has recently joined the National Student Clearinghouse because information on the extent to which students leaving the College are successfully transferring to other institutions will provide useful supplementary information.

As part of its work on the *Educational Effectiveness* data forms, Notreal College disaggregated its retention and graduation statistics by race and gender. The data revealed that retention and graduation rates for all students of color, but particularly for Black and Hispanic men, lag behind the overall rates by 10-12 percentage points. A task force has been established to study the reasons for this difference and to suggest steps to enhance the success of these student populations.

In addition, the College is evaluating its retention and graduation rates with an eye to establishing new goals for the future and has identified priorities for additional measures as follows: 1) off-campus and online students; 2) transfer students; 3) first-generation students; 4) Pell-grant recipients; and 5) graduate students. Because of the low number in this last group, the College will calculate rolling three-year averages. The College expects to have the first round of results for these calculations later this year.

Other Measures of Student Success: Using the Commission's completed *Educational Effectiveness* data forms as a guide, the Assessment Committee specifically considered the measures of student success used by the College. Joined by the Dean of Students and the Director of the Career Services Office, the Committee rather quickly realized that while the institution had IPEDS data on retention and graduation rates, it was the licensure passage rates of its nursing students (this past year 88%) and the job placement rates of graduates in all of its programs that were the College's most informative measures of student success.

As previously noted, particularly given the College's focus on offering professional programs that prepare students for careers, Notreal takes particular pride in knowing that over the past five years on average more than 70% of its graduates – at all levels – have found professional jobs in their

fields within one year of completing their studies, or in the case of some graduate students received a job promotion. The team noted from reviewing the data forms that these rates did vary by program, with accounting (82%) and nursing (89%) students having the most success, and exercise science (65%) and nutrition (68%) somewhat less. This past year, the average salary of those finding a job upon graduation from one of the College's baccalaureate programs was \$56,700 (exceeding the national average of \$49,300). This, too, varied by major ranging from \$42,100 in sports management to \$63,000 in accounting.

The team also reviewed the College's three-year cohort default rate that over the past three years has, due in part to implementation of a financial literacy module in the First-Year seminar that introduces students to the resources available through the SALT program, decreased from 15%, to 12.3%, to 11.1%. On average, bachelor's degree students graduate with a debt of \$27,166 (compared to an annual tuition rate of \$28,500), with 73% currently paying down their debt.

As part of the "College-wide Assessment Program," the Career Services Office and Alumni Affairs are working together with the Director of IR to propose a follow-up study that can be used on a regular basis to track employment activities of students three and five years after college. Previous surveys have been episodic and the results not easily comparable. The College anticipates that the new survey will be used on a pilot basis later this year and then on a regular basis with students three years out from graduation beginning next fall. A possible use of Linked-in data to supplement these surveys is also under consideration.

### *9. Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure*

**Integrity:** Since its founding as the Notreal Academy in 1877, the College has continually made changes in its response to both the needs of its students and the external environment. Throughout this period, the College demonstrated the centrality of students in its deliberations and subscribed to high ethical standards in its dealings not only with students, but also with faculty, staff, alumni, and the general public.

One case in point took place last year when the College identified three separate, serious instances of plagiarism by students, two of which received considerable local publicity. While preserving individual privacy, the issues involved were discussed seriously and professionally by both faculty and students, and as a result, changes occurred both in how students are taught about academic integrity and how the issues are addressed during faculty orientation. Campus leaders among the faculty, administration, and student body expressed their opinion that the institution is stronger for having dealt directly with the problems at hand.

The Board of Trustees clearly recognizes its legal responsibilities as the governing body of the institution and, in particular, its special responsibility for assuring the integrity and mission of Notreal College. Faculty, Staff and Student Handbooks contain policies and practices which reflect an institutional commitment to fairness and integrity, as well as for ethical behavior as groups and individuals in dealing with one another and in representing the institution. The recent discussions that led to the College's revised mission which, while controversial, provided an opportunity for input from all sides to be heard, provide evidence of this commitment.

The College also has policies and procedures to implement services and accommodations for students with identified learning disabilities. However, it should be noted as Notreal College does in its Self-Study, that the College is not a totally barrier-free campus. All recent new construction and renovations have met ADA specifications as required by law.

As noted above, the College demonstrated its ability to learn from an "episodic assessment" of matters relating to Integrity. The self-study observes that there is no systematic periodic assessment of such matters, other than the self-study process itself and commits to conducting another such review as part of its fifth-year interim report.

**Transparency:** Over the past five years, Notreal has moved exclusively to providing online versions of its Catalog, Faculty, Staff, and Student Handbooks. It continues to print the College's Annual Report, admissions search pieces and a viewbook, and an alumni magazine. In general, the institution's website and print publications, that are widely available to appropriate internal and external audiences, present a complete and accurate picture of the College, its programs, resources, policies and procedures. In addition, all of its publications are professionally produced and attractive and reflect a consistent image and public relations theme.

The College has an attractive, user-friendly website that provides students and prospective students with sufficient information to make informed decisions about being admitted and enrolling in the College, and the opportunities available on campus, online, and at its Suburban Health Center site. It also provides instructions about how to obtain additional information with contact numbers and emails for a comprehensive list of departments. Copies of the College's grievance procedures for faculty, staff and students are available on the website and are distributed annually during orientation and welcome-back sessions held at the start of both the fall and spring semesters.

The team found particularly commendable the webpages created for each program about what students do after graduation, to include job placement and salary data supported by surveys and reports produced by the Career Services Office.

**Public Disclosure:** The College used the self-study process to determine the extent to which it made publicly available the information in the standard. The results, summarized well in the Public Disclosure **data** form, indicate that all of the identified information is available either online or in the College's print materials. On the web, approximately 85% of the information is available; by making some of the print publications available on the web, the College now has nearly all of the information specified available on the website. (The College has added material about financial aid and anticipated student debt.) That said, it is not all easy to find. For example, while information about intercollegiate sports was clearly visible on the College's home page, retention and graduation rates, as well as licensure passage rates, required three clicks to find.

The new Director of External Relations is enthusiastic about sharing more information about the College, above all the success of its graduates. Over the next two years, a major re-organization of Notreal's website is planned to make it more user friendly particularly for the public and potential students. At the same time, spurred by the self-study process, the College is rapidly developing an intranet that makes important institutional information such as minutes from the various committee meetings more easily available to the campus community.

Notreal College published notification of its comprehensive evaluation inviting public comment during the month preceding the visit on its website, in its alumni magazine, and in the local community paper, *The Mount Hope Beacon*.

The College used the self-study process to conduct a review of its electronic and print publications. The immediate fixes – including making more of the print materials available on the website – are useful; more useful will be the planned systematic review and revision of the materials scheduled to take place over the next two years.

### ***Affirmation of Compliance***

To document the institution's compliance with Federal regulations relating to Title IV, the team reviewed Notreal College's Affirmation of Compliance form signed by the CEO. As noted in this report, Notreal College publicly discloses on its website and other relevant publications its policy on transfer of credit along with a list of institutions with which it has articulation agreements. Public notification of the evaluation visit and of the opportunity for public comment was made by

the College one month prior to the visit in *The Mount Hope Beacon*, the Notreal Alumni Magazine, and on the College's website. Copies of the College's grievance procedures for faculty, staff and students are distributed annually during orientation and welcome-back sessions held at the start of both the fall and spring semesters. For its online program and courses, Notreal College uses a system of secure logins and pedagogical approaches to verify students' identities to ensure the integrity of the programs. As discussed in Standard 4: *The Academic Program*, the team's review of course schedules and syllabi for a cross-section of Notreal's course offerings, both classroom and online, as well as courses offered in a condensed weekend or intersession/summer format, found the assignment of credit reflective of the College's policy and consistent with the Commission's standards.

### *Summary*

Notreal College used the self-study process, including the Data Dashboards and E-series forms, effectively to review several key aspects of institutional functioning. The reviews conducted as part of self-study led to measurable improvements and commitments for improvement in several areas, including program review, assessment, and a review of how well the College makes key information available to the public.

In general, it is the view of the visiting team that Notreal College is focused on the quality, integrity and effectiveness of its professional academic programs and the success of its students. It is accomplishing its mission under the leadership of an involved and committed Board of Trustees, a capable and experienced president, and a well-qualified faculty and staff committed to serving the needs of Notreal College students.

Having weathered a period of unstable leadership and enrollment declines, Notreal has moved forward in the past two years to adopt a new mission and is developing a strategic plan that directs the development of its future academic programs to healthcare fields, areas in which the job market is projected to remain vital and strong throughout the next decade. In doing so, the career-oriented institution plans to position itself by creating a market niche in the region with the expectation that enrollment will return to the levels it enjoyed in the late 1990's before its traditional business programs came under increased competition from other institutions. The strategy appears promising, with undergraduate enrollments climbing almost 12% over the past five years since its nursing and health and fitness studies programs were introduced – from 1,150 full-time baccalaureate students and 48 associate students in Fall 2019, to 1,285 full-time baccalaureate and 63 associate degree students this past fall.

Other major accomplishments during the past decade were the following: renovation of the College's Vanguard Science building to accommodate the nursing program financed in part by \$2 million gift from a major donor; redesign of the Wella Kome Library/Learning Center; launch of an RN-BSN program both online and off-campus at the Suburban Health Center; formation of three schools to provide focus and identity for the institution's faculty; creation of an Institutional Research Office and Assessment Committee to lead the College's efforts to measure student achievement of learning outcomes and evaluate student success; and an anticipated return to a balanced budget for the current fiscal year.

All of the above were accomplished with the involvement, though not always the agreement, of all elements of the College community. Most recently, a strategic plan (*Notreal College: 150 Years Young*) and the "College-wide Assessment Program" have being finalized and will be reviewed by the Board in December for approval and implementation. These are no small accomplishments for any College, at any time, but are all the more remarkable given that Notreal College achieved these accomplishments during a time when many private colleges were losing ground or were happy to be maintaining their position with respect to enrollment and finances.



However, notwithstanding all of these accomplishments, Notreal College is well aware of the fact that the years ahead will be uncertain at best and the pressures on small private colleges will continue. With this in mind, the team offers the following summary of the most important strengths and concerns.

### **Strengths**

- The current president has brought a renewed level of enthusiasm and drive to the College. Since his arrival, a more focused mission has been adopted and a strategic plan drafted. Use of the institution's established governance structures helped to ensure the inclusion of all College constituencies in the process – faculty, staff, students, trustees, and alumni.
- The “College-wide Assessment Program” that mandates a five-year program review cycle for every area of the College will be instrumental in assessing the institution's overall effectiveness as well as achievement of the College's strategic goals. The creation of an Office of Institutional Research and the judicious use of external consultants have increased the College's capacity to generate data to support its decision-making processes that will be instrumental to this effort.
- Through the leadership of the Assessment Committee and work of the faculty, the College has made notable progress to develop a comprehensive system to regularly assess student achievement of learning outcomes in the institution's Professional Foundation program and in program majors, and there is evidence to show it uses the results for improvement. A variety of direct measures are employed: embedded assignments, capstone courses, portfolios, licensure exam results, and an applied research project at the graduate level that is evaluated by a panel of faculty and local professionals.
- The close working relationship between the faculty, academic affairs, and student services has strengthened the overall student experience at Notreal College. Student learning is reinforced through an integrated curriculum and co-curriculum.
- Providing evidence that Notreal College is accomplishing its mission as a career-focused institution, the College's job placement rates are enviable and the work being done to track the success of Notreal graduates commendable. Students are well served by the Career Services Office that has well established relationships with alumni and local employers to optimize internship, job, and career opportunities.

### **Concerns**

- The recent narrowing of the Notreal's mission to focus on healthcare programs that moved the institution away from its historical emphasis on business and management has resulted in an identity crisis on campus. Mixed messages have been given about the future of College's business and management programs (e.g., the formation of a School of Business and Management while at, at the same time, holding discussions about whether the business degree programs should be redesigned to emphasize the College's focus on healthcare), with the compromise seeming to be the development of minors and specialized courses. Clarification – and acceptance – about “who we are” is needed so that the institution can move forward with the full support of its community.
- Achieving stability in top leadership will be key so that the Board can step back from “micro-managing” the College to a more appropriate oversight role, and so that College can focus its time and resources on implementation of its plans. While much has been accomplished over the past few years, the strategic plan still awaits final approval from the Board and the College-wide Assessment program is yet to be fully operational. Both are

needed to ensure Notreal can demonstrate its overall effectiveness and that progress is being made to achieve the goals that have been set.

- While the College is beginning to have some success in increasing its enrollment as a result of the addition of nursing and other healthcare-related programs thereby restoring a measure of financial stability, it remains tuition-driven and has not identified plans to otherwise diversify its revenue. Its current discount rate, at 55%, is quite high both in absolute terms and in comparison with its peers. A discount rate this high leaves the College with few degrees of freedom to achieve its enrollment goals, such as diversifying the student body or dealing with unforeseen downturns in enrollment.

### NECHE Chair's Exit Report – Advice

On the last day of the visit, typically late morning, the team provides an oral summary of its findings to the institution. As determined by the CEO of the institution, the Exit Report can be open to the entire community or just to a smaller group (e.g., the president and members of the senior staff).

Delivered by the chair on behalf of the team, elements of the Exit Report include:

1. The team's appreciation for the hospitality extended by the institution during the visit. As applicable, this could touch on the institution's efforts to respond to team requests for information and/or to rearrange schedules to ensure members of the community were available to meet with the team, as well as measures taken to provide for the team's well-being during the visit. The chair may also want to thank the members of the team for volunteering their time to be part of the accreditation process.
2. A word or two about the institution's self-study (or report, for focused visits), acknowledging the work of those involved in the process.
3. An explanation of next steps in the process, noting that the Exit Report is simply a time for the team to share its general findings and not a time for questions, answers or debate. In short:
  - a. The team's formal written report will be provided to the institution approximately six weeks following the visit to review for factual errors.
  - b. Around nine weeks following the visit, the institution will receive the final team report that will be shared with the Commission.
  - c. The institution will have an opportunity to provide a formal written response that is also shared with Commission. This response can include an update about actions taken in response to any concerns noted in the team report, as well as any clarifications of/ disagreements with conclusions included in the team report.
  - d. In the semester following the visit, the institution's president and the team chair meet for approximately 60 minutes with the Commission to discuss the entire process – the self-study, the team's findings, the institution's response, and any relevant subsequent events that have impacted the institution. The Commission then deliberates and takes action on the institution's accreditation status and sets any additional reporting needed on issues related to the standards. A notification letter that summarizes the Commission's decision is sent to the institution.
4. A summary of the institution's strengths and concerns as determined by the visiting team, consistent with the list that will appear at the end of the team's report and in its confidential recommendation to the Commission. This summary should be a candid review of both the institution's strengths as well as those areas where the team found a need for improvement. It has been found helpful, particularly if the Exit Report is open to the campus community, to mention something about each of the standards (or areas of focus) for those in the audience who may have been involved with those sections of the report.

The chair's notes for the Exit Report should not be shared with the institution, nor should the team's confidential recommendation to the Commission be disclosed to the institution.

5. Finally, any closing remarks and the visit is concluded.

## The Confidential Recommendation

### The Confidential Recommendation

At its last meeting, the team should reach a consensus on its confidential recommendation concerning the institution's accreditation status and any future reporting requirements. This recommendation is conveyed to the Commission in a letter from the team chair that is *not* shared with the institution. While the recommendation is confidential, it should reflect the tone and content of the team report and the exit report.

In formulating the confidential recommendation, evaluators should remember that NECHE accreditation always applies to the institution as a whole; the Commission does not accredit programs or parts of an institution. Accreditation attests the judgment of the Commission that an institution is guided by well-defined and appropriate objectives, that it has evidence of substantial achievement of those objectives, and that it can be expected to continue its level of achievement; more specifically, it signifies that the institution substantially fulfills the Commission's nine *Standards for Accreditation*.

The team's confidential recommendation fulfills one purpose of the on-site visit: declaring what the team believes should be the accreditation status of the institution. It is a confidential statement of the team's conclusion that, together with the team report, provides a basis for the deliberations of the Commission.

It is critical that the confidentiality of the recommendation be maintained. It should not be shared with anyone from the institution nor, of course, anyone not on the team itself other than the Commission and Commission staff. Since it is a recommendation and therefore subject to possible modification by the Commission, confusion and embarrassment could be created by communicating it to the institution. This caution in no way suggests that the Commission will fail to take the evaluators' recommendation seriously. The recommendation is, however, only one factor in the decision-making process that the Commission has developed in its effort to carry out as responsibly as possible its task of judging an institution's effectiveness.

The team's confidential recommendation should include the following elements:

1. A statement as to what the team believes should be the *accreditation status* of the institution;
2. *Additional reporting requirements*, if any, to monitor the institution between comprehensive evaluations; and
3. The team's *reasons* for the recommendations.

A discussion of each element of the recommendation follows:

**1. Accreditation Status.** A team conducting a comprehensive, focused, or applicant evaluation must make a recommendation as to the accreditation status of the institution. The basic affiliation of the institution with the Commission is at issue. Based on the team's findings regarding the institution's fulfillment of Commission standards, this portion of the recommendation indicates whether or not:

- An institution should be admitted to candidacy;

- A candidate or applicant institution should be granted initial accreditation; or
- An accredited institution should be continued in accreditation or asked to show cause why it should not be placed on probation or have its accreditation withdrawn.

Before being denied candidacy or accreditation, or before being placed on probation or having its accreditation withdrawn, the institution will be asked to show cause why the adverse action should not be taken. Thus, the team's action in these cases is to recommend to the Commission that the institution be asked to show cause why the action should not be taken.

The definitions below are provided to help in the team's determination of an institution's accreditation status. (See also the Commission's policy on the *Range and Meaning of Commission Actions Affecting Institutional Status* and its *Policy on the Status of Probation*).

*Granted Candidacy:* A team should recommend that an applicant institution be granted candidacy when the institution has demonstrated that it meets the Criteria for Candidacy, specifically: 1) meets the Requirements of Affiliation; 2) has, with the intention of meeting the Commission's *Standards for Accreditation*, effectively organized sufficient human, financial, learning, and physical resources into educational and other activities so that it is accomplishing its immediate educational purposes; 3) has established and is following realistic plans to acquire, organize and appropriately apply any additional resources needed to comply with the Commission's *Standards for Accreditation* within the candidacy period; and 4) meets the Commission's standard on *Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure*.

*Granted Initial or Continued in Accreditation:* A team should recommend initial accreditation for a candidate or applicant institution or continued accreditation for a member institution when it has found that the college or university fulfills the *Standards for Accreditation*.

*Probation Status:* A recommendation to show-cause for probation is appropriate when the team finds that the institution fails to meet one or more *Standards for Accreditation*. While such a determination is ultimately a matter of judgment, guidance is provided by the statement of the standard—the boldface text at the beginning of each of the Commission's standards. If an institution is placed on probation, it will have a specified period of time, as delineated in the *Policy on the Status of Probation*, to demonstrate its compliance or the Commission will withdraw the institution's accreditation. Probation is a public status; it may be appealed as detailed in the Commission's *Procedure for the Appeal of Adverse Actions*.

Before making such a recommendation, the team should review the *Policy on the Status of Probation*. In addition, the team chair should consult with Commission staff.

*Denial of Initial Accreditation or Withdrawal of Accreditation:* A candidate institution has a maximum of five years to demonstrate its fulfillment of the standards. The evaluation near the end of the candidacy period represents the institution's application for initial accreditation. If the institution fails to demonstrate that it meets each standard, the Commission is obliged to deny initial accreditation.

A team should recommend show-cause for withdrawal of accreditation if it finds that the institution fails to meet one or more of the Commission's standards to the extent that, in the judgment of the team, it will be unable to bring itself into compliance with the specified probation period.

Before making such a recommendation, the team should review the policy statement on *Range and Meaning of Commission Actions Affecting Institutional Status*. In addition, the team chair should consult with Commission staff.

**2. Additional reporting requirements.** An evaluation team may choose to add additional reporting requirements to its recommendation regarding the institution's status with the

Commission. Among the means the Commission uses to monitor the quality and stability of its accredited institutions between comprehensive evaluations are: a progress report, specifying topics to be addressed in an interim report, submission of an Annual Report on Finance and Enrollment (ARFE), a focused evaluation with a site visit, and/or issuing a Notice of Concern or a Notation.

*Progress report:* A progress report serves the purpose of providing information to the Commission on an institution's success in addressing certain specified concerns when the team believes it is appropriate for the Commission to have such information before a scheduled interim report or comprehensive self-study. It may also provide information about developments or changes at the institution which bear on its accredited status. A progress report should be recommended to provide information which does not require validation through an on-site visit. Thus, the enrollment at an institution may be an appropriate subject for a progress report, but an institution's success in improving communication between administration and faculty would not be appropriate. When a progress report is recommended, the team should clearly specify the subject(s) of the report as well as the timing for its submission. The recommended timing should reflect the urgency of the problem.

*Specifying items for attention in an interim report:* Candidate and accredited institutions are required to submit an interim report at the mid-point between comprehensive evaluations. (Candidacy has a maximum time period of five years. Initial accreditation is granted for no more than five years, and accredited institutions must have a comprehensive evaluation after a period specified by the Commission, not to exceed ten years.) A team may wish to recommend that the institution address certain items in its interim report.

*Annual Report on Finance and Enrollment (ARFE):* When an institution is found to have significant current or potential fiscal and/or related enrollment problems that may adversely affect its ability to continue to comply with the criteria for candidacy or the *Standards for Accreditation*, particularly the standard on *Institutional Resources*, the team may recommend submission of an ARFE. Through this report, the Commission is able to monitor the institution's financial situation between site visits. Components of an ARFE report include: a narrative discussion of the institution's financial and enrollment situation; audited financial statements for the previous two years and accompanying management letters; and completed Finance and Enrollment (F&E) data forms that include information on the institution's financial position, revenues and expenses, debt, admissions, and enrollments.

*Focused evaluation:* A focused evaluation (i.e., visit) should be recommended when the team believes there are concerns that merit validation through an on-site visit rather than a written progress report. Such a visit is preceded by the development of an institutional report and is undertaken by a small team charged to evaluate institutional progress in the designated area(s) of focus. The team may recommend that a focused evaluation accompany an interim report. In making a recommendation for a focused visit, the team should specify the area(s) to be evaluated and the timing of the visit.

*Notice of Concern:* A Notice of Concern should be recommended when the team determines that the institution is *in danger* of being found not to meet one or more of the Commission's standards if current circumstances or trends continue. **A formal Notice of Concern is not made public by the Commission.** An institution issued a formal Notice of Concern undergoes an on-site evaluation within two years to assess its success in addressing the identified concerns. If the Commission finds that the concerns have been appropriately addressed, it will remove the Notice of Concern. If the concerns have not been satisfactorily addressed, the Commission may issue a continued formal Notice of Concern. Alternatively, if the Commission finds that the institution may now fail to comply with one or more *Standards for Accreditation*, the Commission will ask the institution to show cause why it should not be placed on probation or why its accreditation

should not be withdrawn. In making a recommendation for a formal Notice of Concern, the team should specify the standard(s) that the institution is in danger of not meeting.

*Notation:* A Notation should be recommended when the team determines that the public should be notified when conditions at an institution with respect to the Commission's standard are such that the institution's candidacy or accreditation may be in jeopardy if current conditions continue or worsen. **A Notation is made public by the Commission.** An institution on Notation undergoes a focused evaluation within two years to assess the institution's success in addressing the identified concerns. If the Commission finds the institution has successfully addressed the concerns, it will remove the Notation and specify further monitoring. If the Commission has reason to believe the institution may or may not meet one or more of the *Standards for Accreditation*, the Commission will ask the institution to show cause why it should not be placed on probation or why its accreditation should not be withdrawn. If the Commission finds that the concerns have not been sufficiently addressed, a continued Notation will be issued.

**3. Reasons for the Recommendation.** The team's recommendation must be followed by its rationale for the recommendation. There is no established structure or style for this component of the letter. The reasons, citing relevant standards, should be stated clearly and succinctly. They should also be specific and compatible with the content of the report. Enough information should be included so that any reader, even one unfamiliar with the institution and the evaluation, would understand why the team made its particular recommendation.

The team must provide reasons for all elements of the recommendation. Thus, for example, the team should indicate why it believes the institution should be granted or continued in accreditation, or that it be asked to show cause why it should not be placed on probation or have its accreditation withdrawn. If a recommendation for additional reporting is included, the rationale for the recommended reporting, as well as its timing, should be stated. The team's rationale should be linked as directly as possible to the applicable standards and policy statements.

**TEAM'S CONFIDENTIAL RECOMMENDATION  
TO THE NEW ENGLAND COMMISSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

Dr. Lawrence M. Schall  
President  
New England Commission of Higher Education  
301 Edgewater Place, Suite 210  
Wakefield, MA 01880

Dear Dr. Schall:

The visiting team which conducted a comprehensive evaluation of Notreal College on DATE unanimously recommends the following to the New England Commission of Higher Education:

that Notreal College be continued in accreditation;

that the College submit a report for consideration in 2026 that gives emphasis to the institution's progress in implementing its strategic plan (*Notreal College: 150 Years Young*) and evaluating progress made to achieve its goals;

that the interim report due in 2029 give particular emphasis to the institution's success in:

clarifying the future role of the College's business and management programs in light of its revised mission to prepare students for healthcare and related careers;

addressing the financial challenges of a high tuition discount rate combined with a high level of tuition dependence.

The team gives the following reasons for its recommendation:

It is the assessment of the evaluation team that Notreal College is in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation* of the New England Commission of Higher Education and it, therefore, recommends that the College's accredited status be continued. The institution has a mission and purpose appropriate for an institution of higher education which it is currently accomplishing and seems likely to continue to meet in the foreseeable future.

The team recommends a progress report to monitor the institution's progress to finalize and then implement its 2024-2029 strategic plan to move forward toward program specialization in healthcare fields. The interim report should then give attention to the success Notreal has made to clarify the role of its business and management programs that have for the past 150 years defined the institution. As mentioned in the team report, the path Notreal has chosen to increase its enrollment given current job market projections has created a level of cognitive dissonance on campus that needs to be resolved. In addition, reducing the College's tuition discount rate, currently at 55% which is the high end among its peer institutions, will be important to monitor particularly given the College's ongoing dependence on tuition as its primary source of revenue.



Dr. Lawrence M. Schall  
Page 2

Finally, the team believes that the self-study process was useful in giving the College some highly successful experiences in evidence-based efforts for institutional improvement; the fifth-year interim report will provide the College with an opportunity to reflect on the extent to which it has institutionalized this new approach.

Sincerely,

Donald T. Frett  
Team Chairperson

cc: Team Members

**NEW ENGLAND COMMISSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION  
NOTIFICATION LETTER TO INSTITUTION**

Dr. I. M. Curtius  
President  
Notreal College  
Mount Hope, New England

Dear President Curtius:

I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting on DATE, the New England Commission of Higher Education took the following action with respect to Notreal College:

that Notreal College be continued in accreditation;

that the College submit a report for consideration in Spring 2026 that gives emphasis to the institution's progress in implementing and evaluating its strategic plan (*Notreal College: 150 Years Young*);

that the College submit an interim report for consideration in Fall 2029;

that, in addition to providing information included in all interim reports, the College give emphasis to its success in:

1. unifying the College community in support for its mission to prepare students for healthcare and related careers;
2. improving institutional effectiveness through the careful consideration of data and evidence;
3. ensuring financial stability by diversifying its sources of revenues and controlling tuition discounting;

that the next comprehensive evaluation be scheduled for Fall 2034.

The Commission gives the following reasons for its actions.

Notreal College is continued in accreditation because the Commission finds the institution to be substantially in compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation*.

We commend Notreal College for its success in reversing the enrollment declines and financial deficits that had characterized much of the past decade by deciding to increase its program offerings in nursing and other healthcare-related fields. The RN-BSN program that is now offered both online and at the Suburban Health Center is but one example of recent program innovation. The work accomplished by the trustees, faculty, staff, students, and alumni to develop transition plans in support of the new mission is impressive and provided the foundation for a realistic and comprehensive strategic plan. We take favorable note that the strong student development philosophy shared by faculty and staff is implemented comprehensively in the institution's programs and services, and we concur with the visiting team that Notreal has created a robust culture of assessment as demonstrated by the program improvements made both at the undergraduate and graduate level. Providing evidence that Notreal College is accomplishing its

Dr. I. M. Curtius  
- Page 2 -

mission as a career-focused institution, the College's job placement rates are enviable, on average exceeding 70%. The Career Services Office, that provides an extensive array of services for Notreal students, has well established relationships with alumni and local employers that enhance its ability to track the success of Notreal graduates. Notreal College's "lessons learned" over the past decade position it well to continue its institutional development and to find its way forward in the ever-changing higher education market.

The item the institution is asked to report on in Spring 2026 is related to our standard on *Planning and Evaluation*.

We view positively the inclusive process employed by Notreal College to develop its 2024-2029 strategic plan – *Notreal College: 150 Years Young* – that was approved by the Board this past December. Particularly noteworthy were the leadership provided by the steering committee and the use of the institution's established governance structures. The Commission joins the team in expressing the hope that adequate time and support will now be provided to enable implementation of the plan and also the evaluation of progress made to achieve its goals. As specified by our standard on *Planning and Evaluation*, the Commission anticipates being apprised of the success of these efforts in the report submitted for consideration in Spring 2026.

The institution plans beyond a short-term horizon, including strategic planning that involves realistic analyses of internal and external opportunities and constraints. The results of strategic planning are implemented in all units of the institution through financial, academic, enrollment, and other supporting plans (2.3).

The institution has a demonstrable record of success in implementing the results of its planning (2.5).

Commission policy requires an interim report of all institutions on a decennial evaluation cycle. Its purpose is to provide the Commission an opportunity to appraise the institution's current status in keeping with the policy on Periodic Review. In addition to the information included in all interim reports, the College is asked, in Fall 2029, to give emphasis to three matters related to the standards on *Mission and Purposes*, *Planning and Evaluation*, and *Institutional Resources*.

While Notreal College's introduction of nursing and health and fitness studies programs and subsequent decision to focus its mission on such programs have led to increased enrollment, we share the visiting team's judgment that the College has yet to clarify the role its business and management programs will have going forward. As a result, the College community has become divided in its support of the future direction of the institution. We understand that the monthly meetings for faculty to discuss the impact of the current higher education landscape on the College and the recent joint faculty-trustee retreat have been received as positive steps to repair the existing discord and to rebuild a shared vision for the future of the College. We ask that the Fall 2029 interim report give emphasis to unifying the College community in support of its mission to prepare students for healthcare and related careers. This request is in keeping with our standard on *Mission and Purposes*:

The mission and purposes of the institution are accepted and widely understood by its governing board, administration, faculty, staff, and students. They provide direction to the curricula and other activities and form the basis on which expectations for student learning are developed. Specific objectives, reflective of the institution's overall mission and purposes, are developed by the institution's individual units (1.4).

The Commission joins the team in its recognition of how effectively Notreal College used the self-study process and in particular the Data Dashboards and E-series (Making Assessment More Explicit) forms to develop and advance institutional habits of review, reflection, and commitment to improvement. The Commission was also pleased to note that the College has incorporated into its “College-wide Assessment Program” an internal evaluation of every area of the College within a five-year cycle, a process that will be supported by the extensive data collected and analyzed by the Office of Institutional Research. At the same time, the Commission understands that the associated evaluation and assessment systems have just begun to be implemented and therefore looks forward to learning of their success through the Fall 2029 interim report. Our standard on *Planning and Evaluation* provides this guidance:

The institution regularly and systematically evaluates the achievement of its mission and purposes, the quality of its academic programs, and the effectiveness of its operational and administrative activities, giving primary focus to the realization of its educational objectives. Its system of evaluation is designed to provide valid information to support institutional improvement. The institution’s evaluation efforts are effective for addressing its unique circumstances. These efforts use both quantitative and qualitative methods (2.6).

The institution has a demonstrable record of success in using the results of its evaluation activities to inform planning, changes in programs and services, and resource allocation (2.8).

The Commission notes with approval that after almost a decade of operating deficits, Notreal College ended the past fiscal year with a small surplus of \$32,405. We are aware, however, that at 89%, tuition remains the College’s primary source of revenue and no alternative sources have been identified. We are encouraged that interest in the College’s healthcare programs continues to grow as demonstrated by the increased number of applications received for the coming fall semester. Yet the Commission remains concerned, along with the visiting team, about the College’s level of tuition discounting – 55% in the most recent fiscal year – a level that exceeds the national average and that of its peers. While we acknowledge that the Board continues to “keep an eye on” the tuition discount rate, no guidance has yet been developed to direct the award of institutional aid to meet the College’s goals to balance its program portfolio and, at the same time, diversify the students Notreal serves. The Fall 2029 interim report will afford the institution the opportunity to reflect on its efforts to ensure its financial stability by diversifying its sources of revenues and controlling tuition discounting. We remind you of our standard on *Institutional Resources*:

The institution is financially stable. Ostensible financial stability is not achieved at the expense of educational quality. Its stability and viability are not unduly dependent upon vulnerable financial resources or an historically narrow base of support (7.5).

The institution and its governing board regularly and systematically review the effectiveness of the institution’s financial aid policy and practices in advancing the institution’s mission and helping to ensure that the institution enrolls and supports the student body it seeks to serve (7.10).

The scheduling of a comprehensive evaluation in Fall 2034 is consistent with Commission policy requiring each accredited institution to undergo a comprehensive evaluation at least once every ten years.

You will note that the Commission has specified no length or term of accreditation. Accreditation is a continuing relationship that is reconsidered when necessary. Thus, while the Commission has indicated the timing of the next comprehensive evaluation, the schedule should not be unduly emphasized because it is subject to change.

The Commission expressed appreciation for the self-study prepared by Notreal College and for the report submitted by the visiting team. The Commission also welcomed the opportunity to meet with you during its deliberations.

You are encouraged to share this letter with all of the institution's constituencies. It is Commission policy to inform the chairperson of the institution's governing board of action on its accreditation status. In a few days we will be sending a copy of this letter to Mr. Ivor Winters. The institution is free to release information about the evaluation and the Commission's action to others, in accordance with the enclosed policy on Public Disclosure of Information about Affiliated Institutions.

The Commission hopes that the evaluation process has contributed to institutional improvement. It appreciates your cooperation with the effort to provide public assurance of the quality of higher education.

If you have any questions about the Commission's action, please contact Lawrence Schall, President of the Commission.

Sincerely,

Olivia M. Geydor

OMG/ams

cc: Mr. Ivor Winters  
Visiting Team

**Focusing on Outcomes**  
*Some Examples*

<b>Standard</b>	<b>Input</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
<b>1.Mission and Purposes</b>	Mission and purposes are stated clearly. (1.1, 1.2)	Community understands mission. (1.4)	Mission is used to inform decisions, make choices. (1.5)
<b>2.Planning and Evaluation</b>	Planning is broad-based and inclusive. (2.1)	Plans are implemented. (2.4)	Evaluation provides feedback, informs future planning. (2.5, 2.8)
<b>3.Organization and Governance</b>	Appropriate structures are in place. (3.1)	Communication is effective; appropriate individuals and groups are involved. (3.5, 3.9, 3.13)	Decisions get made in effective and efficient way. (3.17)
<b>4.The Academic Program</b>	The academic program is coherent, appropriate to mission. (4.1, 4.3, 4.4) Expectations for student learning reflect the mission of the institution, and expectations of the larger academic community. (4.12)	Academic governance and oversight structures are effective for all programs, all locations, all modalities. (4.5)	Results of academic planning and evaluation are used to inform decision related to decision-making and resource allocation. (4.6)
<b>5.Students</b>	Multiple student bodies are specified and reflect the mission. (5.1, 5.2)	Students are supported in their education. (5.6, 5.9)	Students have an equitable educational experience. (5.20)
<b>6. Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship</b>	There are sufficient, qualified faculty and academic staff to fulfill specified roles. (6.2, 6.3)	Teaching is effective. (6.17) Students receive good academic advising. (6.19) Academic integrity is supported. (6.9)	Faculty are demonstrably effective in carrying out their assigned responsibilities. (6.10)
<b>7.Institutional Resources</b>	Human, financial, information, physical, and technological resources support mission. (7.3, 7.4, 7.21)	Financial planning is realistic and reflects mission (7.4, 7.6, 7.7, 7.10), Resources are allocated based on systematic	The institution is financially stable. (7.5) The results of planning activities are used to inform decision-making

	There are sufficient, qualified staff to carry out the mission of the institution. (7.1)	analysis of plans and institutional data (7.14).	and planning activities. (7.20)
<b>8.Educational Effectiveness</b>	Measures of student success are defined and assessed in a manner that demonstrates educational effectiveness for all student populations (8.1, 8.6)	Direct and indirect measures of assessment are systematically evaluated to support verifiable statements related to student success and achievement. (8.3, 8.7)	Assessment results are used to improve curriculum and learning opportunities and inform planning and resource allocation. (8.8, 8.10)
<b>9.Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure</b>	Policies and procedures are in place and information is readily available (9.8, 9.12, 9.17). The website and publications provide the specified information. (9.18)	The institution fosters an inclusive atmosphere. (9.5) The institution periodically reviews its policies and electronic and print publications. (9.2, 9.16)	Members of the community understand and assume their responsibilities in pursuit of integrity and transparency. (9.1, 9.13) Information is complete, current, accurate, and available. (9.19, 9.20, 9.21, 9.22, 9.23, 9.25)

### MAKING ASSESSMENT MORE EXPLICIT How Teams Review The E-Series Forms

#### From Standard 8: Educational Effectiveness

8.3 Assessment of learning is based on verifiable statements of what students are expected to gain, achieve, demonstrate, or know by the time they complete their academic program. The process of understanding what and how students are learning focuses on the course, competency, program, and institutional level. Assessment has the support of the institution's academic and institutional leadership and the systematic involvement of faculty and appropriate staff.

8.5 The institution uses a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods and direct and indirect measures to understand the experiences and learning outcomes of its students, employing external perspectives including, as appropriate, benchmarks and peer comparisons.

8.6 The institution defines measures of student success and levels of achievement appropriate to its mission, modalities and locations of instruction, and student body, including any specifically recruited populations. These measures include rates of progression, retention, transfer, and graduation; default and loan repayment rates; licensure passage rates; and employment. The institution ensures that information about student success is easily accessible on its website.

8.7 The institution uses additional quantitative measures of success, such as further education, civic participation, religious formation, and others, as appropriate to its mission, to

understand the success of its recent graduates. Information from students and former students is regularly considered.

8.8 The results of assessment and quantitative measures of student success are a demonstrable factor in the institution's efforts to improve the curriculum and learning opportunities and results for students.

8.9 The institution devotes appropriate attention to ensuring that its methods of understanding student learning and student success are valid and useful to improve programs and services for students and to inform the public.

8.10 The institution integrates the findings of its assessment process and measures of student success into its program evaluation activities and uses the findings to inform its planning and resource allocation and to establish claims the institution makes to students and prospective students.

### **E Form Expectation:**

- All institutions select one (or more) approaches offered through the E form – or have worked with Commission staff to adopt a modified or new approach.
- All programs – at all degree levels and offered through all modalities – are included.

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Questions</b>
<b>Complete?</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Are all programs included?</li> <li>2. Is general education included?</li> <li>3. Are institution-wide learning goals included?</li> <li>4. Reading left-to-right, are all columns completed? (i.e., does the institution have learning goals, collect data, review the data, make changes based on the data?)</li> </ol>
<b>Reviewed?</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Was the material in the E forms reviewed by faculty and appropriate administrators as part of the self-study and otherwise as useful in the institution's processes?</li> </ol>
<b>Discussed?</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Is the material in the E forms discussed in the self-study? (Standards 4 and 8)</li> <li>7. Does the 'Description' section explain the institution's approach to assessment and give an overview of what is in the E forms?</li> <li>8. Does the 'Appraisal' section indicate the institution's own evaluation of what it sees when it looks at the completed E forms?</li> <li>9. Does the 'Projection' section indicate commitments of the institution to make its assessment more systematic and to make specific changes based on assessment findings?</li> </ol>
<b>Useful?</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10. Has the institution developed an assessment system that is useful for improvement? Has it made specific plans to improve the system?</li> </ol>



## EVIDENCE OF STUDENT LEARNING

The Commission expects every institution undergoing a comprehensive evaluation to explicitly address its assessment of student learning outcomes and criteria for student achievement, most comprehensively in Standard 8, *Educational Effectiveness*, and also as appropriate in other sections of the self-study report; visiting teams are expected to validate the institution's progress and success in these areas. All of the institution's student bodies – as identified by degree level, location, modality, or other categories – are to be included. To this end, evaluators should seek evidence that the institution demonstrates its practices to assess, verify, and enhance its effectiveness in measuring and reporting student achievement and relate the findings in the team report. The team is also charged with determining whether "... student achievement is at a level appropriate for the degree awarded" (*Educational Effectiveness*, statement of the standard).

**Institutions which measure student learning find that there are three domains which have to be considered:**

- Cognitive learning (the acquisition of knowledge)
- Behavioral learning (the acquisition of such skills as group presentation, leadership)
- Affective learning (the acquisition of areas measured by surveys of student satisfaction)

**Direct measures of student learning may include the following:**

- Capstone experiences (structure/content linked with institutional purposes)
- Portfolio assessment (evaluation protocols indicate how often and by whom one is reviewed)
- Standardized tests (generic, best if used with other measures)
- Performance on national licensure exams (breakdown into effective parts important)
- Locally developed tests
- Essays blind-scored across departments
- Internal/external jury reviewed projects
- Externally reviewed internships/externships

**Indirect measures of student learning may include the following:**

- Alumni, employer, and student surveys
- Exit interviews of graduates and focus groups
- Graduate follow-up studies
- Retention/transfer studies
- Length of time to obtain degree
- Graduation/transfer rates
- Job placement statistics

**Measures which *DO NOT INDICATE* student learning include the following:**

- Faculty publications/recognition
- Courses elected by students
- Faculty/student ratios
- Percentage of students who study abroad
- Enrollment trends

## Measures of Student Success

### Examples from NECHE Institutional Websites

The following are *examples* of measures of student success found on the websites of selected member institutions. The measures are categorized into five groups and within each group by type of institution (e.g., community college, liberal arts college). The five groups of measures are:

1. Retention and Graduation Rates
2. What do graduates do?
3. Licensure and passage rates
4. Transfer students
5. Student undergraduate experience

In addition, institutional data on graduation rates, average annual cost, median earnings are available via the:

**College Score Card (DOE):** <https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/school>

#### **1. Retention and Graduation Rates**

##### **Community Colleges:**

###### RETENTION MEASURES

- Course withdrawal rates (percentage of enrollments that resulted in “W,” “WA,” “N” or “NA” grades)
- Online course withdrawal rates (as above)
- Online course productive grades (percent of Grades A, B, C and P awarded in online courses each term)
- Semester-to-Semester retention (percent of students [headcount] who re-enroll Fall to Spring, Spring to Fall, Fall to Fall)
- Persistence of full-time students: Fall to Fall for First time (no transfer credits), Full-Time (12 credits or more): How many re-enroll the following Fall? How many are part-time the following Fall?

###### GRADUATION/COMPLETION RATES

- Five years after enrolling, the percent of full-time students who completed a degree or certificate or transferred to a bachelor’s degree or other certificate-granting institution or remained enrolled at the community college
- Percent of students leaving in good academic standing prior to earning a degree or certificate who said they had completely or partially satisfied their primary educational goal

##### **State Colleges and Universities:**

###### RETENTION MEASURES

- One- two- and three-year retention rates

- Number and percentage of students getting C- or higher or D+ or lower in Math 099 and ENG 099 for Fall and /spring semesters, five-year trends
- Number and percentage of students passing MTH 099 and enrollment and success (C- or higher) in MTH101 or higher within two semesters. (Also for ENG099 and ENG110)
- One-year retention rate of students taking MTH099 in Fall semesters, by year

#### GRADUATION/COMPLETION RATES

- Year-to-year enrollment, drop-out, and graduation numbers and percentages for six years for cohort groups
- Four- and six-year graduation rate by ethnicity

#### **Specialized Institutions:**

##### RETENTION MEASURES

- Art School: First-second year retention rates compared with AICAD peers.
- Business/Engineering Schools: Year-to-year retention rates over 6 years by cohort

#### **Public Research Universities:**

##### GRADUATION/COMPLETION RATES

- Four-, five-, and six-year graduation rates for in-state and out-of-state students
- Graduation rates (4, 5, and 6 years) by college of entrance to the university – graduated from that college or another college or did not graduate.
- Retention numbers and percentages for cohort groups after one year, two years; and retention and graduation numbers and percentages after four- five, and six years

#### **Private Research Universities:**

##### GRADUATION/COMPLETION RATES

- Graduation in 4, 6, and 8 years, overall and by gender and racial/ethnic status, trends for 12 years
- Years of study to Ph.D. by division and department
- Percent of Ph.D. students awarded the degree within 9 years

In addition, institutions report as a measure of “student success” the percent of graduates with loans and/or average amount of debt for graduates.

## **2. What Do Graduates Do?**

#### **State Colleges and Universities:**

- Percent of graduating seniors with “job lined up,” who say they “will be employed or enrolled in graduate school within a few months of graduation.” Percentages employed working in six named sectors plus “other”

- Percent of graduating seniors pursuing additional education the following year; percent enrolled full-time in a program leading to a degree; percent working toward teacher certification; percent of those enrolled with some form of fellowship or scholarship
- List of institutions where graduating seniors will be in graduate school the following year

#### **Specialized Institutions:**

- Art School: Survey one year from graduation. Percent employed; percent in full-time education program. Of employed, percent employed in a position directly related to their major, percent employed in position indirectly related to their major
- Art School: Number of alumni nominated for an Emmy
- Business/Engineering Schools: Percent of baccalaureate students employed within 6 months; their mean and median starting salaries
- Business/Engineering Schools: Percent of full-time MBA graduates employed within 6 months; their mean and median starting salaries
- Business/Engineering Schools: Rates of placement in employment and admission to graduate school among students who register with the Career Development Center

#### **Liberal Arts Colleges:**

- Graduates, 6 months out: percent employed only, attending school only, employed and attending school, neither
- Employment 6 months out: categorized into 18 fields, grouped (e.g., business) for summary
- Employment 6 months out: match field of employment with desired field of employment, report % working in desired field
- Reported satisfaction with current job (5-point scale)
- Attending school 6 months out: degree-seeking master's, degree seeking doctoral, degree seeking professional; certificate-seeking technical; non-degree seeking
- Doctoral degrees earned, by academic discipline, college alumni 1966-2006, National Science Foundation, Survey of Earned Doctorates. (Does not include professional degrees)
- Survey of students in May, just prior to graduation: Percent of graduating students who say they: have accepted full-time employment, are waiting to confirm offers or still looking; headed to graduate school; awaiting school acceptance; internships or fellowships; planning to travel; no plans
- Percent of students attending graduate school within five years of baccalaureate degree; percent of students becoming scientists, going into social service or government work, involved in education, pursuing careers in arts and design, and going into business
- Named awards, scholarships and fellowships for past three years (includes Harry S. Truman Scholarships, NSF graduate research fellowships, and Fulbright Full Grants)

**Research Universities/Undergraduate Students:**

- Number of undergraduates receiving the Rhodes, Marshall, Fulbright, Truman & Goldwater Scholarships over a 30-year period
- One-year after graduation survey of baccalaureate graduates: employment (by 7 broad categories), plus “other,” plus not employed, by major; enrollment in professional and graduate school percents and numbers by major; enrollment by graduate institution; plans for further study
- Number of applications and number of acceptances to graduate / professional school
- Employment: part-time temporary, part-time permanent, full-time temporary, full-time permanent, with salary distribution levels for each of the above
- By school: distribution by how long it took to find a job; how related the job is to undergraduate studies and to career goals, how well the university prepared them for the job; how satisfied they are with the job. For students not employed, the reason (8 choices, plus “other.”)
- Survey of baccalaureate graduates, 6 months out. Average salary for those with full-time employment, by undergraduate college, and for men and women
- Percent of baccalaureate graduates who say their job is related to their undergraduate major
- Jobs by major (first and second major, as applicable) from senior survey; indicates major, name of employer, city, state, and title or position
- Graduate school by major (first and second major, as applicable), from senior survey; major, graduate school, field of study, and degree

**Research Universities/Graduate Students:**

- Percent of recent Ph.Ds who secured positions in: the non-profit sector (including private academic institutions), the public sector (including public academic institutions), in the private sector
- Percent of recent Ph.Ds who secured positions in administration, teaching, research, consulting, and direct service.
- MBA graduates: percent working in the non-profit sector, the public sector, the non-profit sector; and the percentage pursuing an additional academic credential
- Average salaries earned by graduates entering industry, by level of degree (bachelor’s master’s, Ph.D., and by 3 broad fields of Master’s degrees)
- Employment status at time of submission of dissertation and five years later. Number and percent who indicated: faculty, postdoctoral position, non-academic position, not-yet employed, and not seeking employment.
- Employment status, in above categories, after five years, by broad field of study

**3. Licensure Passage Rates****Community Colleges:**

- Nursing: NCLEX, number examined, number passed, passage rate

- Medical Radiography: ARRT, number examined, number passed, passage rate

#### **State Colleges and Universities:**

- Teaching: Percent passing Praxix II (not required for program completion)
- Marriage and family therapy: percent achieving licensure in state within two years of graduation
- Computer Science: percentile score on ETS major field test in Computer Science

#### **Specialized Institutions:**

- Percent passing licensure exam on the first attempt in the four states with the highest number of graduates taking the exam

### **4. Transfer Students**

#### **State Colleges and Universities:**

- Top feeder institutions from which students transfer, with numbers of students entering

#### **Specialized Institutions**

- Business/Engineering Schools: Top 5 prior institutions for entering transfer students
- Business/Engineering Schools: List of institution from which entering students have transferred, with numbers of students entering from each.

### **5. Student Undergraduate Experience**

#### **Common measures of student engagement include the results of surveys such as:**

NSSE – National Survey of Student Engagement  
 CCSSE – Community College Survey of Student Engagement  
 Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement  
 Faculty Survey of Student Engagement  
 Law School Survey of Student Engagement

#### **Public Colleges and Universities:**

- Number of co-op students placed in business
- Percent of students offered permanent employment by their co-op employers
- Percent of students who compete in intramural, club, or varsity sports

#### **Liberal Arts Colleges**

- Number of studying abroad in a given year (undergraduate day students)
- Percent among a graduating class who completed internships while enrolled
- Percent of graduates receiving credit for foreign study

- Percent of students who engage in academic service learning while undergraduates
- Number and percent of the junior class studying away (in the U.S. and abroad), also by m/f

**Research Universities**

- Percent of undergraduates who say they volunteer in community service at the institution, participate in off-campus internships, play intramural or recreational athletics, play intercollegiate athletics, participate in student government
- Percent of students completing an internship while undergraduates
- Percent of graduates who say they have completed none, one, two, or three or more internships while a student

**SAMPLE DOCUMENTS  
FOR THE ELECTRONIC WORKROOM**

*Revised August 2022*

Standard/Supporting	May also be useful for
<b>Standard 1: <u>Mission and Purposes</u></b>	
Current institutional mission statement	2, 4, 5, 6, 7
Mission statements of colleges, departments, divisions	2, 4
Charter	3
Trustee approval of mission statement	3
Vision statement	2, 4
Reports of trustee, faculty committees reviewing mission	2
Report of a periodic review of the mission statement	2
<b>Standard 2: <u>Planning and Evaluation</u></b>	
<b>Planning</b>	
Strategic plan	3,4,5,6,7,8
Internal or external review of the plan	1,4,7,8
Related plans: e.g., financial, academic, development, technology, facilities, student services	4, 5, 6, 7, 8
Plans of individual departments and units	4
Minutes of planning councils, board planning committees	3
Reports reviewing implementation/effectiveness of prior plans	7
<b>Evaluation</b>	
Institutional factbook	3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
Program reviews of academic and non-academic units	4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
Specialized accreditation self studies, team reports, decisions	4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
Student course and teaching evaluation forms and reports	4,6
IPEDS common data	4,7,8
HEDS or other consortium peer institution data	4,7,8
NSSE or other student survey	1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
Internal audit	7,9
Department or program cost/productivity studies	4,6,7
Cooperative Institutional Research Program data	4,5,6
Placement studies of graduates	4,8,9
Evaluation of recent institutional initiatives	All
Special institutional studies (e.g., prelaw advising, alumni accomplishments, student IT proficiency, AHANA programs)	All
Impact study (e.g., of endowment, community service, financial aid)	4, 5, 6, 7, 8
<b>Standard 3: <u>Organization and Governance</u></b>	
Trustee by-laws	1
<b>Governing Board</b>	
Board membership and affiliation	9
Trustee minutes	1,2,4,7
Trustee committees (e.g., academic, budget) and minutes	2,4,7,9
Documentation of board development activities	2
Policy on board evaluation of the CEO	2
Board goals and self-evaluation	1,2,7



<b>Internal Governance</b>	
College or University Manual	9
Faculty handbook	4,6,9
Employee handbook	9
Institutional policy and procedures manual	2,4,7,9
Integration of online and off-campus faculty and students into governance structures	4,5,6
Policy on faculty role in programs offered at other campuses, internationally, or through distance learning	4,6
Membership and roles of advisory committees, institutional standing and ad hoc committees	1,9
Senate or council charter, membership, minutes	2,4,6
Job descriptions for principal administrators	2,7
<b>Standard 4: The Academic Program</b>	
<b>General</b>	
Catalogues: undergraduate, graduate, summer, continuing education, overseas, branch campus, online programs	5,9
Schedule of program review and specialized accreditations	2
Sample program review documents	2
List of new programs since last review	2
List of program deletions since last review	2
List of major program revisions since last review	2
Format for new program proposals	3
Contracts from contractual relationships involving degree and certificate programs	3,6
List of conferences, institutes and workshops sponsored	1,7
Studies of rigor/student learning outcomes for various locations program levels, and modalities of instruction	2,8
Policy on satisfactory academic progress	2
Policy on Credit Hour Rule	8
Robust collection of syllabi: All programs, locations, modalities	2,8
<b>Undergraduate Education</b>	
Statement of institutional definition of an educated person	1
Core curriculum or general education program	2,8
Results of most review program review of general education	2,8
Studies of student learning outcomes in general education	2,5,7,8
Feedback studies from students on their undergraduate experience	2,8,9
Data on special opportunities for students (e.g., study abroad, internships, research awards, honors): requirements, participation rates, satisfaction, learning outcomes	2,8,9
Studies of program impact in special areas (e.g., service)	2,5,7,8,9
Program reviews of undergraduate programs	2,8
<b>Graduate Education</b>	
Reports of graduate students' qualifications at admissions	5
Graduate student manual	5
Graduate faculty manual	6
List of thesis and dissertation completions	8
List of field and clinical placement sites	9
Scholarships, fellowships, and research support awards	7,8
Studies of retention and graduation rates	2,8,9
Placement studies of graduates	2,8,9
Program reviews of graduate programs	2,8

<b>Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit</b>	
Policies regarding academic integrity and studies of how it is applied in various departments	9
Policy on evaluation of transfer credit	9
Policy on student grading	9
Graduation degree audit procedures	9
Contractual relationships involving academic credit	3,5,9
Policies related to course credits	9
Charter, composition, minutes of committees overseeing credit courses	3,9
Policies on award of credit for prior experience and non-collegiate work	6,8,9
Policies on satisfactory academic progress and results	6,8,9
Organizational charts demonstrating academic oversight of all work for credit	8
Reports of academic and support services available to students not at institution's main campus (incl distance and correspondence learning)	6,9
<b>Standard 5: Students</b>	
<b>Admissions</b>	
Admissions forms (all levels, all locations)	9
Admissions policy statements	9
Admissions goals and recruitment plans and budgets	1
Admissions annual reports	5
Policy on Verification of Student Identity	4
Policy on academic sanctions	4,9
<b>Student Services</b>	
Student Services Annual reports, past 5 years	2
Reports on how students are served at branch campuses, other instructional locations, campuses abroad, and online	4,8
Financial aid policy	9
Studies of the impact of financial aid on the composition of the student body, admissions, retention, and other salient variables.	2,8,9
Training manual for residence hall assistance	9
Resources for commuter students	8,9
Resources for students studying at a distance	4,7,8
Studies of student satisfaction with campus resources	2,4,7,8
Orientation programs for: first-year and transfer students, students on other campuses and locations, students on campuses abroad, students studying at a distance, graduate students	4,7,8
Studies of student participation in out-of-class activities, including athletics, recreation, arts, cultural activities, etc.	1,2,4,8
Policy on student records	9
<b>Standard 6: Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship</b>	
Faculty cv's by department (full-time and continuing part-time)	7
Faculty employment contract	7,9
Promotion and tenure criteria and process	1
Faculty hiring plans, overall and by academic unit	2
Procedures for appointment of new faculty	7,9
Office of faculty development: annual reports	2
List of faculty development funds and awards	7
List of teaching support workshops for part-time and adjunct faculty	4,7
Policy on faculty workload and assignment	1,4
<b>Teaching and Advising</b>	
Policies on academic advising	5,9
Studies of the effectiveness of advising	4

Manual for teaching assistants	5,7
Documentation of centers, programs to support teaching	4,9
Documentation of faculty/student role in academic integrity	6,9
<b>Scholarship and Research</b>	
Institutional policies on scholarship and role of research for faculty	1,4
Policies on academic freedom	4,9
Annual report on research productivity and external funding	1,4,7,8,9
<b>Standard 7: Institutional Resources</b>	
<b>Human Resources</b>	
Policies and procedures related to human resources	2,4
Procedures related to the review of human resource policies	2
<b>Financial Resources</b>	
Budget development policy and procedures	2
Budget requests, by unit; Budget allocation by unit	4,5,6
Capital budget plan	2,4,5,6
Minutes of board financial committee	3
Reviews of new initiatives with financial implications	1,2,3,4
Crosswalk between budget and other plans (strategic, academic. . .)	2,4,5
Policy on risk management	3,9
Endowment spending policy	3
Investment policy	3
Cost/revenue studies by location, program, mission element	2,4
Audits, institutional foundation	2
Plans for debt retirement	2
<b>Information, Physical, and Technological Resources</b>	
Inventory of space (by campus location)	4
Master plan for space	4,5
Rental agreements for instructional space (all locations)	4,5
Capital budget plan	2,4,5
Report of classroom/technology space	4
Policies for system reliability, integrity and security of data	4, 9
Policies on individual privacy	9
Space allocation policy	4,5
Studies of matching academic programs with space allocation	2,4
Inspections of campus safety of instructional, residential, administrative, and research space	9
Insurance policies	9
Prioritized list of unmet space needs	2,4,5
Deferred maintenance list	2,4,5
Plan for addressing deferred maintenance	2
Security plan for academic, administrative, residential space	9
Reports from committees on space and facilities	2
Library budget, past 5 years	8
Collection development plan	2, 4, 8
List of databases and electronically available resources	4, 8
Copies of agreements with consortia or other libraries	4, 8
Library annual report / Usage statistics	2, 4
Schedules and guides for faculty and student training on library	4, 5, 6, 8
Statement of information literacy as student learning outcome	4, 8
Comparison of collections, access, and use with peer institutions	2, 4, 8
Consultant reports on library collections, access, and services	2, 4, 8
Student surveys of library collection, access, and services	2, 4, 8
Faculty surveys of library collection, access, and services	2, 4, 6, 8

Studies of student information literacy	2, 4, 8
List of departmental liaisons to the library; reports of involvement	6
Report of the faculty library committee	6
Reports of library services for students studying at a distance	4, 8
Technology plan (institutional and/or by unit)	2, 4
Policy on support for faculty, students, classes, management	4, 5, 6
Programs of training for faculty, students, staff on technology	4, 5, 6, 8
Budget requests and funded budgets for technology by year	2
Technology committee reports	2, 4, 5
Reports or statements on how technology supports learning	4, 8
Statistics on usage of technology by unit, in classes, elsewhere	2, 4, 8
Reports on technology to support management information	5
Surveys of student, faculty, and staff satisfaction	2, 4, 6
TLT Roundtable Minutes and reports	4
Evaluations of management information systems	2, 4, 5
Comparisons with peer institutions	2
<b>Standard 8: Educational Effectiveness</b>	
<b>Assessment of Student Learning</b>	
Studies of student learning in general education	1, 2, 4
Reports of student learning outcomes, by program	2, 4, 8
Reports of student learning in areas such as service learning, information literacy, study abroad, leadership	1, 2, 4
Assessment Plans	2
Licensure pass rates	2
Summaries of employment information and/or pursuit of higher degree for recent graduates	2
Transcript analyses	2
Internship evaluations by supervisors	2
Student satisfaction surveys	2, 5
Studies of how students are learning at the institution	2, 5, 6
Documentation of support for assessment (e.g., Teaching/Learning Center, faculty development, small grant support)	2, 6
<b>Retention</b>	
Retention and graduation studies for special categories of students (e.g., transfer students, AHANA students, students studying at a distance, athletes)	4,9
Graduation rate studies	2,9
<b>Standard 9: Integrity, Transparency, Public Disclosure</b>	
Policies and procedures with information on their dissemination	4,5
Academic honesty	4,5
Privacy rights	4,5
Academic freedom	5,6
Non-discrimination and affirmative action	7
Faculty grievances	6
Employee grievances	7
Student grievances	5
(Research policies found in Standard 4)	
Rights and responsibilities of students living in university housing	5
Information on use and effectiveness of the above policies	8
Editorial policy for publications, websites, electronic information	7
Catalogues: undergraduate, graduate, summer, continuing	4,5
Reviews of website information	4,7
Recruitment publications	1,4,5

Electronic publications: videos, CD's websites	4,5
Policy on public access to institutional information	4,5
Recruitment material (publications, letters, phone protocols)	5
Notice of availability of institutional information, including audited financial statement	7



Credit Hour Review	Evidence	Findings
<b>1. DOES THE INSTITUTIONAL POLICY (or POLICIES):</b>		
Address the amount of instructional time assigned and homework typically expected of a student?		
Set expectations for student learning and workload in line with NECHE policy and federal regulations?		
Include all delivery formats offered: distance and correspondence, condensed formats, low residencies, summer and weekend programs?		
Provide appropriate and sufficient detail?		
<b>2. DOES THE EVIDENCE REVIEWED DEMONSTRATE THE INSTITUTION IS FOLLOWING ITS AWARD OF CREDIT POLICY?</b>		
Where is the policy published?		
Is there a process for periodic review of credit hour assignments (e.g., program review process, new course approval process)? Is there evidence the process is followed?		
Are faculty informed about the credit hour policy?		
What is the process for informing faculty (e.g., new faculty orientation, at faculty meetings, in faculty handbook)?		
<b>Course Catalog:</b> Do any courses exceed the normal award of credit (e.g., > 3 credit hours)? If so, is the workload appropriate for the credit hours awarded?		
<b>Course Schedule:</b> Do classroom courses meet for the prescribed number of hours?		

**Course Syllabi:** Do syllabi reflect the credit hour policy?

- **All Course levels:** Lower-level / Upper-level / Graduate Course;
- **All Delivery formats:** classroom; distance and correspondence, condensed formats, low residencies, summer and weekend programs

**(Note: Sample should be a robust and diverse representation of syllabi across disciplines.)**

**Draft Text for Standard 4: Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit / Credit Hour:**

## Commission Policies

Please visit the [Resources for Visiting Team Members](#) webpage for the most comprehensive and up to date materials regarding evaluation visits.

Below are links to several of the policies and guidelines referenced in the Visiting Team Resource Guide:

1. [Peer Evaluator Expectations](#)
2. [Policy on Credits and Degrees](#)
3. [Student Verification and Transfer of Credit](#)
4. [Affirmation of Compliance](#)
5. [Antitrust Compliance Procedures](#)
  
6. [Procedures for the Focused Evaluation Visit](#)
7. [Procedures for the Substantive Change Evaluation Visit](#)
8. [E-Series Forms: Making Assessment More Explicit](#)
9. [Guidance on In-Person Campus Visits as Part of a Virtual Visit](#)
10. [Policy for Virtual Visits](#)
11. [Guidelines for the Review of Off-Campus and Distance Education Programming during a Comprehensive Evaluation](#)
12. [Guidelines for the Evaluation of Competency-Based Education Programs](#)



## Applying the Standards

### 1. Educational Effectiveness

*“The institution uses a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods and direct and indirect measures to understand the experiences and learning outcomes of its students, employing external perspectives including, as appropriate, benchmarks and peer comparisons” (8.5).*

“The institution defines measures of student success and levels of achievement appropriate to its mission, modalities and locations of instruction, and student body, including any specifically recruited populations. These measures include rates of progression, retention, transfer, and graduation; default and loan repayment rates; licensure passage rates; and employment. The institution ensures that information about student success is easily accessible on its website” (8.6).

Self-study: Hinterlands State University: Our IPEDS retention and graduation rates (see Data Dashboards) are not as high as we would like, although we believe they are comparable to peer institutions around the country. Given our longstanding reputation as the state’s “second chance university,” however, we have not found these to be useful measures, as we enroll large numbers of students who bring at least some prior college credit with them. With respect to retention, the University hopes to seek external funding to support participation in the National Clearinghouse. In the meantime, HSU’s IR Director has been an active participant in the state-wide assessment initiative. The first three meetings were spent trying to reach consensus on the definitions of key data elements. In addition, most HSU department chairs gather anecdotal evidence about the success of their graduates. These stories, many of which are used in HSU’s viewbook, are extremely gratifying. The President announced in 2019 that HSU would convene an assessment committee. However, because faculty were working to rule that year, the Faculty Senate refused to appoint members to the committee. Plans for the administrators on the committee to attend an assessment conference had to be scrapped when the legislature imposed an out-of-state travel ban as a cost-cutting measure. The University recognizes the importance of the assessment of student learning and knows that it needs to do more in this area.

*Questions for consideration:*

What do you need to know that is not included in the above portion of the self-study?

With whom will you want to meet when on campus?

### 2. Interrelatedness of the Standards

**Standard 2:** B. Willder University’s Strategic Plan for 2020-2023 has as one of its goals increasing undergraduate enrollment from 2,800 to 4,000. Though ambitious, the operational plan for this goal includes the development of several new degree programs focused on healthcare in line with the University’s revised mission.

**Standard 5:** This past fall semester, B. Willder had a total undergraduate enrollment of 2,500 students, including 700 first-year students which was a record number for the

University. The increase in new students was attributed to expanded outreach to international student markets and to a restructuring of institutional financial aid awarded.

**Standard 7:** The operating deficit projected for the current fiscal year is in part due to having missed enrollment targets set for the incoming freshman class – 695 students compared with a goal of 710 students. As a result, projections for the next three years have been revised downward by 5%.

*Questions for consideration:*

What information do you wish to see besides that referred to in the self-study narrative?

How will you work with your team members to review the information provided?

With whom do you think you will want to meet when on campus and what questions might you ask?

### **3. Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure**

Standard: *“The institution has readily available valid documentation for any statements and promises regarding such matters as program excellence, learning outcomes, success in placement, and achievements of graduates or faculty” (9.15).*

Website: Expert Institute of Technology: On average, more than 70% of Expert Institute graduates – at all levels – have found professional jobs in their fields within one year of completing their studies, or in the case of some graduate students received a job promotion.

*Questions for consideration:*

What information will help assure you that the institution is meeting the Commission’s standard on *Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure*?

### **4. Organization and Governance**

Standard: *“The board, administration, staff, and faculty understand and fulfill their respective roles as set forth in the institution’s official documents and are provided with the appropriate information to undertake their respective roles” (3.1). “The institution’s system of governance involves the participation of all appropriate constituencies and includes regular communication among them” (3.2).*

Self-study: Marionette College: The Board fulfills its responsibility to understand the mission and purposes of the College, establish institutional policies, and ensure adequate risk management and regulatory compliance. Over the past ten years, the Board has requested the development of a new program in construction management and eliminated programs in religious studies and art history for financial reasons. The Faculty Senate meets twice a semester – at the beginning and end of each term – to hear reports from the faculty standing committees that include: Academic Council, Admission and Educational Policies, and Library and Technology. Marionette’s President attends all board meetings as an observer to ensure she is aware of the discussions on strategic planning and decisions made about the future direction of the College.

*Questions for consideration:*

As there are questions about how (and whether) the College fulfills these portions of the standard on *Organization and Governance*; what approach will you take to the issue?

What sort of evidence will you be looking for before and during your campus visit?

**5. The Academic Program**

What would you need to learn in order to feel confident that the institution is fulfilling this portion of the standard on *The Academic Program*?

Credit for prior experiential or non-collegiate sponsored learning is awarded only with appropriate oversight by faculty and academic administration and is limited to 25% for credentials of 30 credits or fewer. When credit is awarded on the basis of prior experiential or non-collegiate sponsored learning alone, student learning and achievement are demonstrated to be at least comparable in breadth, depth, and quality to the results of institutionally provided learning experiences. The policies and procedures for the award of credit for prior or experiential learning are clearly stated and available to affected students (4.39).

### SOME INTERESTING SITUATIONS ...

The purpose of these situations is to enable evaluators to:

- understand the nature and limits of the evaluator's role during the visit;
- anticipate problems in gathering information for the team report;
- appreciate the conduct expected of team members on campus;
- collaborate with team members and team chair.

Consider each of the situations below. How would you respond?

- a. Having heard from some students at an off-campus institutional location that library resources are not very easy to access online, you meet with the Librarian. She informs you that the information technology department was recently reduced from five to three staff members due to budget cutbacks. She asks for your help in advocating that a technology specialist be added to the library staff so that she can better set priorities for information technology projects. You...
- b. In response to your question about how the institution reviews progress made to accomplish the goals of its strategic plan, the Executive Vice President says: "Actually, we're looking for ways to improve that area; how do you handle it at your place?" You reply ...
- c. After interviewing a few part-time faculty, you have doubts about whether they are integrated into the academic departments as described in the self-study and by the Provost. Your next step is...
- d. Your review of the institution's enrollment projections indicates that the College has, for the third consecutive year, budgeted for three hundred freshmen. It has not met this goal for the previous two years. When you meet with the CFO, you ask what plans have been made in the event that the College does not meet its projection again. They reply, "Well, we're hopeful that we'll continue to hold our own." You ...

**CONVERSATION: A FOCUS ON THE STANDARDS**

**1. Specifically for your standard(s), how will you include the following selected areas as part of your review?**

**STANDARD 2 *Planning and Evaluation***

2.1 Planning and evaluation ... involve the participation of individuals and groups responsible for the achievement of institutional purposes and include external perspectives. Results of planning and evaluation are regularly communicated to appropriate institutional constituencies.

2.2 Institutional research is sufficient to support planning and evaluation.

2.3 The institution plans beyond a short-term horizon, including strategic planning that involves realistic analyses of internal and external opportunities and constraints.

2.5 The institution has a demonstrable record of success in implementing the results of its planning.

2.6 The institution regularly and systematically evaluates the achievement of its mission and purposes, the quality of its academic programs, and the effectiveness of its operational and administrative activities, giving primary focus to the realization of its educational objectives.

2.7. ... Systematic feedback from students, former students, and other relevant constituencies is a demonstrable factor in institutional improvement.

**STANDARD 3 *Organization and Governance***

Statement of the Standard: The institution has sufficient autonomy and control of its programs and operations consistent with its mission to be held directly accountable for meeting the Commission's *Standards for Accreditation*.

3.3 ... Where the institution's ownership or affiliation structure or other circumstances or requirements may involve more than one legally constituted body with authority, the institution demonstrates that the governing body with direct responsibility for the institution's quality and integrity has sufficient autonomy and control to be held accountable for meeting the Commission's Standards and to ensure that it can act in the institution's best interest and that the legally constituted bodies with authority have an aligned understanding of their respective roles.

3.4 The board assures representation of the public interest in its composition and reflects the areas of competence needed to fulfill its responsibilities.

3.7 The board assures that the institution periodically reviews its success in fulfilling its mission and serving its students. The Board is effective in helping the institution make strategic decisions and confront unforeseen circumstances. It regularly reviews the institution's systems of enterprise risk management, external audits, regulatory compliance, internal controls, and contingency management. The board assures appropriate attention is given to succession planning for institutional leadership and, where applicable, the composition of the board itself.

3.12 ... The chief executive office assures that the institution employs faculty and staff sufficient in role, number, and qualifications appropriate to the institution's mission, size, and scope.

3.14 The institution's chief academic officer ... assure[s] the integrity and quality of academic programming however and wherever offered.

3.15 The institution places primary responsibility for the content, quality, and effectiveness of the curriculum with its faculty.

3.16 The system of governance makes provisions for consideration of student views ...

#### **STANDARD 4 *The Academic Program***

4.3 Programs leading to degrees ... have a coherent design and are characterized by appropriate breadth, depth, continuity, sequential progression, and synthesis of learning.

4.5 Through its system of academic administration and faculty participation, the institution demonstrates an effective system of academic oversight, assuring the quality of the academic program wherever and however it is offered.

4.6 The institution develops, administers, and on a regular cycle reviews its academic programs that includes evidence of student success ... and incorporates an external perspective.

4.16 The general education program is coherent and substantive. It reflects the institution's mission and values and embodies the institution's definition of an educated person and prepares students for the world in which they live.

4.21 Graduate programs are not offered unless resources and expectations exceed those required for an undergraduate program in a similar field.

4.29 In accepting undergraduate transfer credit from other institutions, the institution applies policies and procedures that ensure the credit accepted reflects appropriate levels of academic quality and is applicable to the student's program. The institution's policies for considering the transfer of credit are publicly available to students and prospective students on its website and in other communications. The information includes the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education along with a list of institutions with which it has articulation agreements.

4.36 The institution demonstrates its clear and ongoing authority and administrative oversight for the academic elements of all courses for which it awards institutional credit or credentials.

4.45 The institution offering programs and courses for abbreviated or concentrated time periods or via distance or correspondence learning demonstrates that students completing these programs or courses acquire levels of knowledge, understanding, and competencies equivalent to those achieved in similar programs offered in more traditional time periods and modalities.

#### **STANDARD 5 *Students***

Statement of the Standard: Consistent with its mission, the institution sets and achieves realistic goals to enroll students who are broadly representative of the

population the institution wishes to serve. The institution ... provides a safe environment that fosters the intellectual and personal development of its students.

5.3 The institution has an orderly and ethical program of recruitment and admission that complies with the requirements of legislation concerning equality of educational opportunity. Its admission and retention policies and procedures are clear, consistent with its mission and purposes, and available to all students and prospective students in appropriate printed and digital institutional publications. The institution ensures the integrity of its admissions standards and processes through regular evaluation.

5.5 The institution utilizes appropriate methods of evaluation to assess student readiness for collegiate study and provides services sufficient to serve the needs of students admitted.

5.9 The institution offers an array of student services, including physical and mental health services, appropriate to its mission and the needs and goals of its students.

5.20 Through a program of regular and systematic evaluation, the institution assesses the effectiveness of its efforts to achieve an equitable educational experience for all of its students and the appropriateness and effectiveness of its student services to advance institutional purposes. Information obtained through this evaluation is used to revise these efforts and services and improve their achievement.

#### **STANDARD 6 *Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship***

6.1 ... All faculty are appropriately integrated into the department/division and institution and have appropriate opportunities for professional development.

6.2 There are an adequate number of faculty and academic staff, including librarians, advisors, and instructional designers, whose time commitment to the institution is sufficient to assure the accomplishment of class and out-of-class responsibilities ...

6.11 The institution defines the scholarly expectations for faculty consistent with its mission and purposes and the level of degrees offered. Through their scholarly pursuits, all faculty are current in the theory, knowledge, skills, and pedagogy of their discipline or profession.

6.19 The institution's system of academic advising meets student needs for information and advice compatible with its educational objectives. The quality of advising is assured regardless of the location of instruction or the mode of delivery.

#### **STANDARD 7 *Institutional Resources***

7.1 The institution employs sufficient and qualified personnel fulfill its mission.

7.5 The institution is financially stable. Ostensible financial stability is not achieved at the expense of educational quality.

7.14 The institution's financial planning, including contingency planning, is integrated with overall planning and evaluation processes. The institution demonstrates its ability to analyze its financial condition and understand the opportunities and constraints that will influence its financial condition ...

7.18 The institution directs its fundraising efforts toward the fulfillment of institutional purposes and conducts them in accordance with policies that stipulate the conditions and

terms under which gifts are solicited and accepted. The institution's gift acceptance policies protect the institution's academic freedom and integrity.

7.21 The institution has sufficient and appropriate information, physical, and technological resources necessary for the achievement of its purposes wherever and however its academic programs are offered.

7.26 The institution effectively uses information technology to ensure its efficient ability to plan, administer, and evaluate its program and service.

## **STANDARD 8 *Educational Effectiveness***

8.1 The institution enrolling multiple student bodies, by degree level, location, modality, or other variables, develops and uses the data, evidence, and information below for each student body.

8.3 ... The process of understanding what and how students are learning focuses on the course, competency, program, and institutional level.

8.6 The institution defines measures of student success and levels of achievement appropriate to its mission, modalities and locations of instruction, and student body ... These measures include rates of progression, retention, transfer, and graduation; default and loan repayment rates; licensure passage rates; and employment. The institution ensures that information about student success is easily accessible on its website.

8.7 The institution uses additional quantitative measures of success, such as further education, civic participation, religious formation, and others, as appropriate to its mission, to understand the success of its recent graduates.

8.8 The results of assessment and quantitative measures of student success are a demonstrable factor in the institution's efforts to improve the learning opportunities and results for students.

## **STANDARD 9 *Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure***

9.1 ... Institutional leadership fosters an atmosphere where issues of integrity can be openly considered, and members of the institutional community understand and assume their responsibilities in the pursuit of integrity.

9.2 ... Appropriate policies and procedures are in effect and periodically reviewed for matters including intellectual property rights, the avoidance of conflict of interest, privacy rights, and fairness in dealing with students, faculty, and staff.

9.15 The institution has readily available valid documentation for any statements and promises regarding such matters as program excellence, learning outcomes, success in placement, and achievements of graduates or faculty.

9.16 Through a systematic process of periodic review, the institution ensures that its print and digital publications are complete, accurate, available, readily accessible, and current. The results of the review are used for improvement.

9.22 The institution publishes statements of its goals for students' education and makes available to the public timely, readily accessible, accurate, and consistent aggregate information about student achievement and institutional performance. Information on student success includes rates of retention and graduation and other measures of student success appropriate to institutional mission. If applicable, recent information on passage rates for licensure examinations is also published.





**2. Specifically for your standard(s), share general advice and tips for a successful visit.**

- What do you look for when reading the self-study?
  
- What documents and supporting materials are particularly helpful?
  
- Whom do you interview while on campus and what questions do you ask?
  
- How will you use the expertise of team members evaluating other standards?
  
- What type of information will you want/need to learn about any off-campus locations and/or distance education programs offered by the institution?

**GROUP REPORTS**

At the end of this session, we will ask one new team member and one experienced team member from each group to report back:

**Experienced Team Member:** An approach you will use to ensure one of the significant areas of your standard is covered in the evaluation and team report.

**New Team Member:** A particularly helpful tip to review your standard you learned from your colleagues that you will apply during the visit.

### EXCERPTS FROM THE TEAM REPORT FOR NADIR COLLEGE

*(a strong contender for the award for Worst Team Report Ever Written!)*

As the subheading above suggests, the team report for Nadir College is riddled with many of the “common problems” with team reports. For each excerpt, identify what’s wrong and indicate how this part of the report could be improved.

#### **Mission**

Nadir College was founded in 1926. It nearly closed after the collapse of the stock market three years later but its founders managed to scrape together enough money to keep going. That resiliency has served Nadir well during its proud history. It has enjoyed impressive growth in its student body, and its physical campus has expanded from a single all-purpose building to a multi-acre location. The College is preparing a grand celebration to mark its 95<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year.

What’s wrong?

Suggestions for improvement:

#### **Planning and Evaluation**

Nadir College began a comprehensive strategic planning process three years ago. In September of that year, the president emailed the campus community to announce the planning process. In October, his cabinet met to discuss who would be on the planning committee. In November, the cabinet sent a proposed strategic planning committee to the trustees for their approval. In January, potential committee member were invited; by March, the committee membership had been finalized. In April, the committee met for the first time and, in May, for the second time ...

What’s wrong?

Suggestions for improvement:

#### **Organization and Governance**

During the visit, a serious situation was brought to the attention of the team by one member of the faculty. He pointed out that, unlike at his previous institution, meetings of the Board of Trustees of Nadir College are not held in a “town-meeting” format where any member of the campus community can speak about any issue. This faculty member believes strongly that this impedes the ability of the Nadir faculty to participate

responsibly in college governance. The team recommends that the president should bring this matter to the attention of the Chair of the Board and consider changing the format of the trustee meetings ...

What's wrong?

Suggestions for improvement:

### **The Academic Program**

The Certificate of Advanced Basketweaving program is designed to provide licensed basket-weavers with the credential they need to advance in their careers. It is offered to working adults in a highly popular "3 for 3" format, where students earn 3 graduate credits for attending 3 one-hour classes on successive Saturday mornings. Faculty are all adjunct. Although none has an advanced degree, all are practicing basketweavers. A review of syllabi suggests that students read, on average, two books for each course; multiple choice tests are the preferred format to assess student work. The program has never undergone a review, but student satisfaction surveys are done at the end of each course, and students routinely express gratitude to the College for offering this program in a format that fits their busy lifestyles. Other programs offered by the College include ...

What's wrong?

Suggestions for improvement:

### **Students**

The team met with a good number of students while on Nadir College's main campus. Student Services offers all of the standard services and programs expected at a college of Nadir's size and character, including intercollegiate and intramural athletics programs, residence life programs, health and counseling services, and orientation programs. The staff are well qualified, but the team urges Nadir to upgrade the position of Dean of Students to Vice President of Student Affairs, as this is what most institutions are doing these days ...

What's wrong?

Suggestions for improvement:

### **Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship**

Nadir College does not meet the Standard on Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship. There don't seem to be enough full-time faculty, most of the academic staff are part-time, and the College's progress on its scholarship goals has been lackluster. The credentials of the faculty and academic staff vary widely, and there are faculty teaching in the graduate program that don't seem to have appropriate qualifications. Standards for promotion and tenure are not in keeping with AAUP guidelines, and the College's commitment to scholarship and research is weak and unimpressive.

What's wrong?

Suggestions for improvement:

### **Institutional Resources**

Nadir College meets this standard. The College's non-teaching staff is currently adequate in number. Nadir College is financially stable, and its multi-year financial planning is realistic. The tuition discount rate is moderate, and the Board reviews the financial aid and gift acceptance policies, which seem appropriate. It is audited annually, and it has reasonable fiscal policies. The library is a spacious, bright, attractive building with sufficient shelving for the print collection, and students have access to a number of electronic databases and journals. The physical campus includes several classroom buildings and residence halls, and the College has adopted a regular replacement cycle for all computers.

What's wrong?

Suggestions for improvement:

### **Educational Effectiveness**

Strengths:

- Nadir College collects IPEDS retention and graduation rate data. (8.6)
- The Assessment Committee has adopted a five-year program review cycle. (8.10)

Concerns:

- Nadir College does not track the success of its recent graduates. (8.7)

Recommendation:

- Nadir College should develop a plan to track the success of its recent graduates. (8.7)

What's wrong?

Suggestions for improvement:

**Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure**

Under the visionary leadership of Dr. Angela Honor, the Director of Integrity, Nadir College definitely exemplifies the values it articulates in its mission and related statements. She is to be commended for her exceptional work in assuring that truthfulness, clarity, and fairness characterize the institution's relations with all internal and external constituencies and for her dogged insistence that the institution's educational policies and procedures are equitably applied to all its students. Unfortunately, the Nadir College website is one of the worst the team has ever seen. The colors are dull and the fonts, old-fashioned. There is no animation and just about no graphics. It is impossible to find links to any blogs. The College must take immediate action if its website is to function effectively as a tool for marketing and promotion.

What's wrong?

Suggestions for improvement: