

Cumberland County College
Executive Summary of the Self-Study Process and Report
Board of Trustees
October 19, 2010


The Middle States Commission on Higher Education is responsible for accrediting colleges and universities in the mid-Atlantic region. Accreditation is the assurance that an institution meets the 14 specific standards outlined in the publication, *Characteristics of Excellence*. Accreditation is necessary for approval by the federal government to provide funds for student financial aid. Accreditation also ensures transfer institutions and employers of the quality represented by an institution's courses and degrees. Accredited colleges and universities are required to undergo an evaluation process every five years; an institutional Self-Study followed by a site visit at ten year intervals, and a Periodic Review at the intervening five year time-points. Cumberland County College began its self-study process in Fall 2008. A site visit by a team of 8 qualified peer-reviewers from other community colleges will take place from March 6-9, 2011. The timeline for this process included the following steps:

- Eight subcommittees were appointed by the President to analyze the extent to which the college was or was not meeting the 14 standards for accreditation. These subcommittees include over 60 representatives from all college areas, students and trustees. A Steering Committee coordinated the process.
- A Self-Study document list was developed and copies of the documents were placed in the Self-Study resource room for use by the subcommittees. Electronic copies have been stored as well.
- A Self-Study Design was developed by the committee and approved by our Middle States liaison, Dr. Mary Ellen Petrisko who visited the College in April 2009 and met with the President, staff, faculty and the steering committee.
- The subcommittees prepared their initial reports at the end of Fall 2009. Each report was reviewed by at least 4 reviewers, comments were sent back to the subcommittees and final subcommittee reports were prepared in Spring 2010. The eight Self-Study chapters were developed from the subcommittee reports.
- The Self-Study Report is now in its seventh draft. The review process is ongoing. It has been made available to all college employees both in hard copy and via the College's website. The report has been discussed with various College groups, comments have been submitted and the document has been altered accordingly.
- A preliminary site visit by the Chair of the Middle States Site Visit Team, Dr. Murray Hoy, will take place on November 10. He will meet with the President, trustees, administrators, faculty and students to determine if we are ready for the full site visit on March 6-9, 2011.

As a result of the subcommittees' work, the 200-plus page report covers the 14 standards and contains over 100 recommendations for ways in which the College can improve its effectiveness. These recommendations will be used to create a matrix showing the status of the recommendations prior to the site visit in March 2011. Brief synopses of the report chapters follow.

Chapter 1 – Standard 1- Mission and Goals and Standard 6 - Integrity

This chapter describes the process used to develop CCC's Mission Statement and then analyzes each segment of the Statement to determine whether the College is fulfilling its Mission. Key aspects of the Mission are its learning-centeredness and its dedication to serving a diverse community with quality, innovative programs. Integrity is analyzed in terms of matters related to students, employees, academic freedom and accountability.

Continued... 

Chapter 2 – Standard 2 - Planning, Resource Allocation, Institutional Renewal and Standard 3- Institutional Resources

The various planning processes – strategic, annual and master planning- are detailed here. The sources of revenue and the College’s expenditures are explained and analyzed. Diagrams depict the annual budget process, as well as the ongoing budget review process. Examples of budget requests based on assessment are included. Both institutional and external funding of instruction, technology, and student services are described and analyzed.

Chapter 3 – Standard 4- Leadership and Governance and Standard 5 – Administration

Reviewed here are the roles of trustees, the administrative structure and shared governance. Administrative units and their functions are described with examples of assessment included. The charges and membership of the four Governance Councils are explained as is the shared governance process used to review and discuss such wide-ranging issues as program development, academic honesty and facilities planning.

Chapter 4 – Standard 7 -Institutional Assessment and Standard 14 – Assessment of Student Learning

This chapter analyzes the extent to which the College has developed and implemented a systematic process to assess institutional effectiveness. Included are examples illustrating that “the assessment of institutional effectiveness is an ongoing process.” The use of assessment data to increase institutional effectiveness, and an analysis of student learning outcomes assessment are included.

Chapter 5 – Standard 8 – Student Admissions and Retention and Standard 9 – Student Support Services

The analysis in this chapter involves student success and provides examples of the relationships between services to students and alignment with the College’s Mission. Each student development unit is analyzed in terms of assessment of its effectiveness. Retention rates, assessment and new initiatives are included.

Chapter 6 – Standard 10 - Faculty

This standard requires that the College’s “programs be devised, developed, monitored and supported by qualified professionals.” The chapter includes an analysis of such topics as faculty recruitment and evaluation, professional development, participation in planning and curriculum assessment. Key concerns are the faculty to student ratio, the percentage of sections taught by full-time and adjunct faculty and the effects of increased enrollment.

Chapter 7 – Standard 11 – Educational Offerings and Standard 12 – General Education

These standards require that the College’s academic programs “demonstrate rigor and content appropriate to its higher education mission.” Described are the programs offered by the College, examples of their content and program-level student learning outcomes assessment. The standard for General Education requires that the College’s programs include such general education skills as “oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning and technological competency.” This chapter describes the assessment of these skills through required general education courses.

Chapter 8 – Standard 13 – Related Educational Activities

In this chapter, the analysis focuses on such topics as remediation of basic skills, short-term and career certificates, distance learning, hybrid courses, non-credit offerings and the process of awarding credit through recognized academic procedures. Emphasis in this chapter is on the requirement that “the institution’s programs and activities are characterized by particular content, focus, location and mode of delivery” meet appropriate educational standards.

The Self-Study Report includes several appendices to document the material described.