

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The self-study process indicates that Queensborough Community College (QCC) of the City University of New York (CUNY) is a strong institution that is responsive to its students' needs and to the challenges of teaching and learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The institution is a very different one from that of the previous Middle States reaccreditation. The senior administration is largely different, including the president, who came on board less than a year after the self-study. Large numbers of full-time faculty have been added to the ranks, principally because of an infusion of funding from CUNY for this express purpose. In its appearance, the campus has been transformed; maintenance and care of the buildings and facilities are a priority, and substantial renovation and reconstruction have occurred across campus.

The two most important changes since the last Middle States review have been in strategic planning and academic program review. As a direct result of recommendations from the previous Middle States review, the college developed and has followed a rigorous strategic planning process, which is discussed at great length in chapter 2. The college also switched from departmental self-studies to academic program reviews, which require in most cases collaboration among departments in their self-study of specific curricula. This is discussed at length in chapter 8.

### Strengths

As a unit of CUNY, QCC is held accountable to institutional measures and targets that enable the College to remain vital and to ensure institutional renewal on a yearly basis. Two principal examples of this are the Strategic Plan Completion Report and the CUNY Proficiency Examination (CPE). During each academic year, the College develops a Strategic Plan of goals and objectives and then compiles by the end of the year a Completion Report of institution-wide targets and goals exceeded, met, not met, or in progress. The Completion Report is reviewed by the chancellor of CUNY. The CPE is a CUNY-wide examination that all students must pass to be eligible for graduation from an associate degree program or to transfer to or proceed into upper-level courses at a CUNY baccalaureate institution. QCC's curricula, which include a writing-intensive requirement, along with academic and student support services, prepare students to meet this important educational milestone.

QCC prides itself on the vitality of its shared governance. Through strong collaboration among its constituencies, the institution is able to respond to emerging student and community needs and to take a leadership role among community colleges in facing the challenges of 21<sup>st</sup> century higher education. A far-reaching example of this collaboration is the institution's ambitious efforts to establish Learning Academies for all first-time, full-time students by fall 2009. The academy model is a collective institutional response to student needs and challenges in higher education.

In consonance with its mission, educational objectives, and strategic planning, QCC's educational offerings display academic rigor and coherence that are guided by larger general education initiatives. In this way, the undergraduate education experience for students is a holistic one, integrating academic programs with student support services and cultivating critical thinking skills and other competencies for lifelong learning. Clearly presented student learning goals and objectives keep students focused on career goals or transfer. A prime example of this attention to student learning is the existence and impact of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL), whose primary mission is to support and facilitate faculty research into pedagogy.

To complement the undergraduate education experience, a rigorous institutional assessment plan and structure exist to evaluate all levels of the institution, its courses and programs and initiatives. On the whole, this multiplicity of approaches and protocols has produced much useful and valuable data and

analysis that support increased effectiveness in teaching and learning at the college. In addition to the CPE cited above, another example of the rigorous assessment undertaken at the institution is the robust program review process, for which there are templates, rubrics, external reviewers, reports, and action plans for institutional renewal and improvement.

## **Areas of Concern**

While the self-study process has confirmed the strengths of the institution described above, it has also identified areas of concern leading to recommendations for improvement in every chapter. The areas may be grouped in five categories: governance, faculty, curriculum, assessment, and space.

### **Governance**

The presiding officer of QCC’s Academic Senate meetings is the president of the college. According to one fundamental element of the standard on governance and leadership, the presiding officer should be an elected official. The recommendation from chapter 3 is to consider a change in the governance bylaws to account for this election.

### **Faculty**

Despite concerted efforts to hire faculty from underrepresented groups, the College still needs to address this issue. The recommendations from two chapters are, simply, to recruit, hire, and retain faculty from underrepresented groups. All efforts should be addressed to this end.

### **Curriculum**

As with other educational initiatives at QCC, emphasis has been placed on incorporating elements across the curriculum. The writing-intensive requirement at the college is a prime example. In an effort to emphasize the essential skills of information literacy and oral communication and the necessity of science and mathematics in general education, chapter 6 on educational offerings recommends that the College should consider incorporating information literacy, speech, mathematics, and science across the curriculum.

### **Assessment**

In an effort to improve the current assessment database, a cross-disciplinary, college-wide assessment protocol database committee should be established to redesign the current database. In the next five years, there are areas of assessment that would benefit from the establishment of appropriate protocols, simplification, and streamlined intra-institutional access.

### **Space**

The College has long needed additional space for classrooms and faculty offices. No buildings have been erected on campus in about 30 years. Though the use of space has been maximized and will continue to be maximized, a more farsighted approach is necessary. Two chapters recommend that the institution invest in a comprehensive Facilities Master Plan by an external agency for a long-term and lasting solution to this longstanding concern.

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The self-study report is divided into eight chapters that cover all 14 standards of excellence; a glossary of terms is also included. Appendices are bound separately; a master table of contents appears at the beginning, for ease of reference. Additional materials and reports will be made available in the resource room for the site team and, in many cases, on the College’s website.