Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students

of

Berkshire Community College

Pittsfield, MA

by

An Evaluation Team representing the
New England Commission of Higher Education

Prepared after study of the institution's
self-evaluation report and a site visit
October 20-23, 2019

The members of the team:

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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.

New England Commission of Higher Education
Preface Page to the Team Report
Please complete **during the team visit** and include with the report prepared by the visiting team

Date form completed: 10/21/2019

Name of Institution: Berkshire Community College

1. **History:** Year chartered or authorized 1960 Year first degrees awarded 1961

2. **Type of control:** X☐ State ☐ City ☐ Religious Group; specify:
☐ Private not-for-profit ☐ Other; specify:
☐ Proprietary

3. **Degree level:**
X☐ Associate ☐ Baccalaureate ☐ Masters ☐ Professional ☐ Doctorate

4. **Enrollment in Degree Programs:** (Use figures from fall semester of most recent year):

	Full-time	Part-time	FTE	Retention[a]	Graduation[b]	# Degrees[c]
Associate	516	1074	814	53.5%	18.0%	317
Baccalaureate	-	-	-	-	-	-
Graduate	-	-	-	-	-	-

(a) full-time 1st to 2nd year (b) 3 or 6 year graduation rate (c) number of degrees awarded most recent year

5. **Student debt:**

	Most Recent Year	One Year Prior	Two Years Prior
Three-year Cohort Default Rate	11.7%	17.9%	11.7%
Three-year Loan Repayment Rate	43%	42%	44%

	Associate	Baccalaureate	Graduate
Average % of graduates leaving with debt	47%	-	-
Average amount of debt for graduates	$7,000.00	-	

6. **Number of current faculty:** Full-time: 46 Part-time: 74 FTE: 68.23

7. **Current fund data for most recently completed fiscal year:** (Specify year: 2019)
(Double click in any cell to enter spreadsheet. Enter dollars in millions, e.g., $1,456,200 = $1.456)

Revenues		Expenditures	
Tuition	$4,474,000	Instruction	$9,560,000
Govt Appropriations	$17,025,000	Research	
Gifts/Grants/Endowment	$7,671,000	General	$8,906,000
Auxiliary Enterprises	$421,000	Auxiliary Enterprises	$510,000
Other	$536,000	Other	
Total	$30,127,000	Total	$25,976,000

8. **Number of off-campus locations:**
In-state: X Other U.S. International Total: 1

9. **Number of degrees and certificates offered electronically:**
Programs offered entirely on-line: 0 Programs offered 50-99% on-line: 11

10. **Is instruction offered through a contractual relationship?**
X☐ No ☐ Yes Specify program(s):

INTRODUCTION:

All members of the Berkshire Community College (BCC), throughout the team's visit, were open and candid in their comments and they were cooperative and helpful in aiding the team. All of the individuals with whom we met were knowledgeable about the self-study report and the purpose of the team's visit. Extensive meetings were conducted with the Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, students, and alumni. The administrative support provided to schedule individual and group meetings with team members was outstanding and greatly appreciated.

A dinner meeting was held on Sunday evening with the President, members of the administrative team, faculty, and staff. The visiting team had the opportunity to meet with the self-study team and with the members of the committees that were responsible for each of the standards. This provided an opportunity to make connections and to get acquainted.

The workroom provided by the College contained either links to the documents needed or hard copies of the 2014-2019 Strategic Plan, audited system financial statements, enrollment and retention reports, and college publications including the 2019-2020 College Catalog, View book, employee and student handbooks, sample yearly assessment reports for liberal studies, faculty teaching load reports, library reports, course schedules, student satisfaction surveys, and other pertinent documents. The team appreciated the preparation of the self-study to include electronic links to the most important exhibits.

The team member's review of these documents before and during their visit to Berkshire Community College, the team chair's preliminary visit to the College on April 16, 2019, and the team's visit to the College on October 20-23, 2019, provided the basis for the information and evaluation judgments contained in the nine sections of this report which addresses the Standards for Accreditation of the New England Commission of Higher Education.

The evaluation of Berkshire Community College is a comprehensive evaluation. The team found that the Self-Study report provided sufficient information to specifically address how Berkshire Community College is meeting the Standards for Accreditation.

STANDARD ONE: MISSION AND PURPOSE

Berkshire Community College was established in 1960, the first community college in Massachusetts. The College has a nearly 60-year history of thoughtful planning and strategic implementation of changes to better serve its students and the community.

In 2013, the College entered into a strategic planning process that included faculty, staff, administration, students, and community members. This process reviewed the College mission and purpose statements and identified the institutional values that accompany those statements.

Berkshire Community College's reaffirmed Mission and Purpose statements, along with its core values, are displayed prominently in the college strategic plan, *Achieving Excellence – Transforming Lives,* on the college web site and in the college catalogue. This strategic planning

process provided a broad base for the affirmation of the Mission and Purpose of the institution and provided a solid base for the new college strategic plan.

The committee's discussions with the campus community affirmed the broad base understanding and support for the campus mission and purposes from the campus, the community and the Board of Trustees.

It was evident to the visiting team that the work done to affirm the College Mission and Purposes was at the center of the strategic planning process that began in 2013. The College acknowledges its responsibility to provide an entry point to higher education for students who may be challenged by social, economic or physical barriers while affirming its commitment to the liberal arts.

The visiting team was impressed by the work done by the College to engage the community in the planning process and to affirm its mission statement and purposes.

STANDARD TWO: PLANNING AND EVALUATION:

Based on meetings with college staff, faculty, and senior administrators, and a review of supplemental supporting documents[1], the visiting team finds that BCC invests significantly in comprehensive, integrated, and broad-based planning and evaluation, and confirms that these are indeed priorities at the institution.

In the self-study report, the College candidly discusses the need to improve its evaluation efforts. It points, for example, to the absence of clear, measurable outcomes for each of the five strategic directions in the 2014-2019 Strategic Plan, and notes, "while much hard work has been undertaken over the past five years to address key strategies in the plan, there is no clear and consistent way to assess whether or not the overall goals have been achieved." The absence of incremental measures/targets might also be a contributing factor to the waning of the Strategic Plan Implementation Team's development of action plans and reporting beyond years one and two. Notably, in its self-appraisal, the College states that it plans to work closely with its Office of Institutional Effectiveness to set realistic and measurable goals for the upcoming 2021-2026 Strategic Plan.

During the visit, team members heard a range of perceptions about the state of evaluation – college personnel often acknowledged its efforts across the College in these terms: sporadic, fragmented, and an afterthought. There were also instances when data-informed decision-making was discussed noting that the data, processes, and findings resided in disconnected pockets. Less frequently, the visiting team heard and saw evidence that the continuous learning and feedback loop not only occurred, but also was institutionalized (in an accessible, shareable format) and promoted widely as a best practice. Some of these are highlighted in the report under Incubator Projects.

[1] i.e., contents of the Data Fact Folder, instructional design coaching logs, Marketing Survey results, Enrollment Management Idea's effort-impact survey, Title III Annual Evaluation report

This self-reflection about evaluation echoed the direction that BCC received from NECHE in 2015 which was to "give emphasis to the institution's success in implementing its strategic plan," (Standards 2.3 and 2.4 cited) and previous NECHE guidance in "implementing systematic and integrated evaluation activities across the College and using the results for improvement" (in 2012 and 2010).

Planning:

The self-study report noted that a 34-member cross-divisional Strategic Planning Committee was formed in the fall of 2013 that included faculty, staff, and administrators, and was co-chaired by a full-time faculty member and senior administrator. The College engaged external consultants to guide a four-part planning process: 1) designing a process to engage key stakeholders; 2) conducting an internal and external environmental scan; 3) convening listening sessions for college and community partners to identify potential strategic directions and goals; and 4) disseminating a draft plan to the College community for consensus building, comments, and feedback.

Highlights of the strategic planning process include the *inclusivity and scope* of the listening sessions - eight held with area business, industry, nonprofits, education, and legislative partners, and 11 held with faculty, staff, students, trustees, BCC Foundation Board members, alumni, and other internal constituents. More than eighty-five proposed initiatives from these sessions were subsequently cross-checked against BCC's Mission, Values and Vision Statements, and Massachusetts Board of Education's (BHE) Vision Project Goals. The Strategic Planning Committee then worked to *coalesce the ideas into five strategic directions*: 1) Engaged Learning, 2) Student Achievement, 3) Improved Infrastructure, 4) Advancing the Institution, and 5) Collaborative Partnerships. Each had five to eight key operational strategies, and a summative strategic outcome statement. Over 150 faculty, staff, and students participated in the process through fourteen separate divisional meetings that contributed to the final document, which was approved by the College's Board of Trustees at its May 7, 2014 meeting.

Undergirding the five Strategic Directions were two comprehensive environmental scans – an external scan that examined the constraints and opportunities presented in regional demographic, economic, and cultural trends and anticipated disruptions in the higher education sector; and an internal scan examining the strengths and weaknesses within the College itself. Together, the results helped BCC to realistically plan beyond a short-term horizon, in all major units of the institution. The self-study report provided links to a dozen operational plans that align with the 2014-2019 Strategic Plan and guide the College's efforts and resource allocation.

While the self-study highlighted a revised "Program Review" process/reporting template, the visiting team found the absence of an Academic Plan problematic. In addition, in light of the identified need to strengthen its evaluation efforts, BCC would benefit from the development of a comprehensive Evaluation plan to provide a college-wide structure to aid in continuous improvement

The team was particularly impressed by the outstanding and impactful set of facilities improvements accomplished that had been included in the Campus Master Plan Update. In addition, the Internal Control Plan specifies and rates a variety of potential risks the College faces.

The creation of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (IE) is a direct outgrowth of the 2014-2019 Strategic Plan's implementation. Its mission is to promote educational effectiveness through the support of planning and evaluation across the College. IE team members (a Director, Statistician, and Research Analyst) collect, analyze, and disseminate data pertaining to strategic, academic, student services, and other resource planning, policy development and evaluation efforts. Over and over the team heard BCC staff praise the value-added service provided by IE, particularly its planning and evaluation expertise, function as a repository of a wealth of accessible data, and approachability. In order to improve the systematic use of this data, the IE office plans to develop a centralized, interactive dashboard through which program, course, and other types of data can be accessed during the coming year. With assistance of the Information Technology (IT) staff, the College will utilize Tableau software to create dashboard views that will support a greater focus on key performance indicators related to enrollment, retention, and graduation. A variety of Tableau software licenses (Viewer, Explorer, and Creator) will be made available to trustees, President's Cabinet members, administrators, and faculty to access and interact with these data.

Finally, the team finds that the implementation of Incubator Projects served as a visible laboratory to articulate, plan, execute and evaluate innovative and testable ideas that have the potential to mobilize advancement in each of the five strategic directions (e.g., Mursion software to utilize formative and summative assessment results, and the library renovation to repurpose underutilized space). Not only did the College benefit from these and other successes which have gone on to be institutionalized, but it also presents the opportunity to demonstrate learning through "small failures." Based on conversations with staff and faculty, these projects contribute to the widely expressed view that resources are generally available to carry out teaching and learning efforts that align with the mission, values and goals of the College as expressed through the strategic plan.

Evaluation:

The research and reflection afforded by the comprehensive 2013 Strategic Planning process positioned BCC well to conceptualize, apply for, and ultimately be awarded a Title III Strengthening Institutions Program grant in support of The Completion Framework. The overall purpose of this project is to improve student engagement to graduation through three inter-related components: 1) *Integrated enrollment services* that provide a One-Stop point of contact for student transactions, refines orientation to expedite acclimation to the college environment, and employs new technological systems to support progress with timely interventions; 2) *Completion pathways* that defines a 'pathway' model to expedite completion, identifies advising coaches for each pathway to support students to completion, and provides contextualized First Year Experience courses to promote the use of critical success strategies; and 3) *Engaged learning* that incorporates active learning strategies throughout the curriculum, supported by online faculty toolkits, and sustained through extensive professional development and training. Through an examination of the yearly annual evaluation reports, the visiting team found that the structure and accountability requirements of this five-year federal grant have served to ensure sustained and high-quality quantitative and qualitative effectiveness measurement of this set of inter-related student services and academic components. Further, the team found comments by The Completion Project's external evaluator validating that "Berkshire Community College's Title III project is strategically managed and fully integrated into the institutional structure."

Other achievements toward the realization of BCC's educational objectives are also evaluated on a regular basis. Regular evaluative reports include the Voluntary Framework for Accountability (VFA), the Comprehensive Annual Reporting System (CARS) for Perkins, IPEDS, SENSE, the annual graduate survey, and annual review of licensure exam passage rates that are posted in the Data Fact Folder. Results are shared at a number of meetings such as those of the President's Cabinet, Board of Trustees presentations, and department meetings. Through its meetings with faculty members, staff, and units on campus (such as the Enrollment Management Committee, Marketing, and Center for Teaching and Learning Innovation) and its review of additional supplemental documents provided during the visit, the team found evidence of BCC's commitment to systematic evaluation of the achievement of its mission, educational objectives, and the provision of valid information to support institutional improvement.

Finally, the College's academic program reviews will use a recently developed common template to ensure that the reports include all information required for a complete and timely review. Senior administrators report that plans are underway to construct curricular maps for all academic programs to ensure that coursework builds coherently and consistently toward the development of knowledge, skills, and dispositions that the current program outcomes promise. The College has plans to adopt the "stackable" model in some disciplines as part of its commitment to integrating academics with workforce development. BCC is positioned to make significant progress towards systematic programmatic evaluation and assessment.

STANDARD THREE: ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNANCE

Berkshire Community 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 effectively communicated for the trustees, staff, faculty, and students. The College places a strong emphasis on communication, both vertically and horizontally.

The College has experienced significant turnover since 2014. As stated in the self-study, most of the Vice Presidents have retired, as did several deans. Additionally, the College has had to deal with several challenges, including a work-to-rule and a failed VP of Academic Affairs search. However, it has gone through reorganizations in both Academic Affairs and Student Affairs that were well researched, methodical, and deliberate. The newer structures that exist in both Academic and Student Affairs reflect the strengths and talents of the personnel who were hired. The reorganizations better align the institution to pursue its mission and the appraisal of the impact of these changes is an ongoing focus of the College.

Governing Board

The Massachusetts Board of Higher Education (BHE) coordinates activities among the Commonwealth's system of public higher education. The Massachusetts Department of Higher Education is responsible for executing the BHE's policies. The BHE has demonstrated a deep commitment to the mission of community colleges through its "Big Three" completion plan, which focuses on boosting college completion rates, closing the achievement gaps, and attracting and

graduating more students from underserved populations. BHE has recently announced its focus on "The Equity Agenda," which will focus on significantly raising enrollment, attainment, and long-term success outcomes among underrepresented student populations.

Pursuant to Massachusetts law, a local Board of Trustees governs Berkshire Community College. The ability of the College to have a local Board of Trustees has provided the College with a level of detailed oversight that has been helpful. Trustees reported they have direct control over the budget, academic program approval, and general oversight of the College. The connection of local Board members to the Berkshire community has strengthened BCC's ability to serve the needs of its region.

Coordination between the BHE and the College's Board of Trustees has been aided through the creation of the Office of Trustee Relations (OTR) in 2012. The Director of the OTR serves as a resource on trustee issues, attends at least one Board meeting each year, and develops professional development activities. The site visit confirmed that the BCC board appreciates the vision and data provided by the BHE while maintaining its specific oversight responsibilities.

The Berkshire Community College Board of Trustees engaged in a self-evaluation in 2017-2018. Through this process, the Board identified the need for greater engagement at Board meetings. As a result, new processes were put in place to provide more data and information about campus projects and programs. Additionally, a data dashboard was established to help track progress on institutional priorities. During the site visit, board members confirmed the process has led to more effective discussions, better questions and input, and greater board engagement.

Internal Governance

The President of the College has served in the role for seven years. She reports to the BCC Board of Trustees. The President has an Executive Council with which she meets on a bi-weekly basis. The Executive Council consists of the Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Vice President for Student Affairs, and the Vice President for Administration and Finance. Additionally, she has a President's Cabinet that also meets on a bi-weekly basis. The Cabinet includes: members of the Executive Council; Deans of the academic programs; Director of Human Resources; Dean of Enrollment Management; Dean of Students; and Dean of Teaching & Learning Innovation. These groups are committed to the College's mission and purposes. This structure provides coordination that meets the needs of the institution.

Recently, the College experienced the retirements of the Vice Presidents for Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Community Education and Workforce Development. Subsequently, the College developed a task force, comprised of a cross section of the institution, to recommend a structure consistent with the needs of the College and its mission. Based on this process, two significant changes were made.

First, the Student Affairs division was reorganized to provide more holistic and efficient services to students. The new structure consists of three distinct areas: Student Enrollment Services, Student Financial Services, and Academic and Career Advising. It better streamlines the

onboarding process. The College attained funding to support a Dean of Students position that leads Student Engagement, Student Support, and Recreational Activities.

Second, the Academic Affairs division was reorganized with the goals of streamlining nursing leadership, aligning credit and non-credit offerings, creating a true STEM division, and institutionalizing faculty support. Addressing these goals resulted in a new structure; where there had been three divisions, there are now five. In addition, the Center for Teaching and Learning has been reimagined as the Division of Teaching and Learning Innovation. Campus members report that, while early in the process, the reorganization seems to be working.

As noted above, over the course of the past few years, the College has experienced a significant amount of retirements, turnover, new hires, reorganization efforts, rethinking of committee bylaws, and transitions. Additionally, campus members reported further changes will occur as they continue to evaluate the most effective structure to support the mission. Campus members reported that clarity around roles and goals will be very important.

The College employs numerous methods to communicate and govern. All-college meetings, the College Senate, Academic Affairs, Educational Affairs meetings, and The Weekly Scoop (a weekly email to the campus) are the primary modalities in which faculty and staff interact and are made aware of important college information. The College also uses a variety of social media applications to communicate with members of the campus community.

As stated in the self-study, the College Senate provides a space for discussion of matters important to the entire college community, including issues related to the Strategic Plan, the budget, academic affairs, and student affairs and enrollment management. While this provides campus members a forum to communicate, in 2017 members of the Senate believed it served little purpose and asked the President if it could be disbanded. The President brought this issue to an All-college meeting. The decision was that the College Senate would not be disbanded; rather there is now an institutional effort underway to clarify its role. The College Senate has also begun looking at its bylaws to provide it with more clarity of purpose.

There were more general assertions of confusion surrounding charges/goals of some committees and the need for clarification and direction in order to see meaningful results.

The College takes proactive steps to involve students in organization and governance. Several committees have had active student engagement, including the Board of Trustees, the College Senate, and nursing. Retaining students on other committees, however, has been a challenge.

The Student Handbook, available on the institution's website, contains all appropriate procedures and policies related to college life at Berkshire Community College.

STANDARD FOUR: THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM

Introduction

Berkshire Community College offers over 50 Associate degrees and certificates that aim to prepare students to transfer to four-year institutions or to enter into the workforce through certificates and terminal degrees. Associate degrees require a minimum of 60 credits of coursework with a minimum of 20 of those credits meeting general education requirements in AS degrees and as many as 36 in AA degrees. Courses are offered in traditional classroom settings at the College, as well as online, and through various arrangements with at least five local high schools. In addition, the College potentially offers enough courses online, as of 2019, that students will be able to complete 50% or more of 11 different degrees through this mode of course delivery. All courses, both on-campus and online, are developed and evaluated for their academic quality and rigor through processes overseen by college administrators and discipline faculty; expectations for courses are published in print and online on the college website, as well as in course syllabi prepared by faculty and reviewed by their deans and department chairs. Students are also given the opportunity to receive credit for prior learning and experience, as determined through established processes of review under faculty and administrative oversight.

Assuring Academic Quality

Programs and courses at the College are created by faculty and put through approval processes of the college academic governance structure, including oversight by the Educational Affairs Committee, department chairs, academic deans, program coordinators, and the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Six programs in various healthcare related areas, including an AS in Nursing, are also accredited by external accreditors, and prepared for accreditation by program coordinators at the College. All other academic programs submit to a regular 5-year cycle of program reviews; this process has been revised as recently as 2019 and the self-study points to at least one example (Human Services) of a program that used the results for improvement. Both the self-study and follow-up discussions with faculty and deans confirmed an awareness on the part of the College of the need for continued improvement and more consistent use of the program-review process.

At the time of the team visit, the College was anticipating action by the accreditors of the 50-year-old nursing program after previous actions had been taken by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN) and the Massachusetts Board of Registration in Nursing (MABORN), regarding the status of the program. In 2018, the College had received "notices of approval with warning" from both accreditors, which led the College to hire a consultant to address the accreditors' concerns. ACEN subsequently fully approved the program, and MABORN is expected to give their updated determination subsequent to their October visit. A factor has been the challenge of adequate assessment of the nursing program according to contemporary expectations and standards of evidence-based program evaluation.

The College also hired a consulting firm (Gray Associates) to assist in determining the viability of existing programs and the potential for new ones that might address the changing needs of the communities in the College's service area. In the words of the self-study, the results are being "used to develop plans to sustain enrollment, to create new academic and non-credit programs that are responsive to workforce needs and market programs to non-traditional students." These efforts are currently in process, and results are too early to assess or report. Several other programs (e.g., Peace and World Order Studies, Foreign Language) were canceled based on

assessment of enrollment numbers, and arrangements were made for "teaching out" students remaining in the programs. Still other programs, including Engineering Technology and Hospitality, are being considered for yet-to-be-determined revisions due to low enrollment in their current form.

The College, through a predominantly faculty-led committee, developed a set of core competencies (reduced from 12 down to 4) that are embedded in a broad range of courses; students are then expected and advised to take an appropriate selection of courses to demonstrate achievement of these competencies. Included in these competencies is the expectation that students will demonstrate college-level writing ability, not only through English courses but in other areas of the curriculum as well. Individual faculty, members of the Educational Affairs Committee, and various academic deans who spoke with the members of the visiting team expressed confidence in the value and practice of identifying these competencies and incorporating them into the curriculum. What was not clear from review of the self-study, supporting materials, or discussion with members of the College, was how student achievement of the competencies is being assessed and the resulting data/evidence used for improvement.

Competencies are publicized in the college catalog and on the college website, as well as in a broad sample of current syllabi. Yet, uncertainty about their consistent use was raised as, contractually, full-time and adjunct faculty members are not required to incorporate the competencies into their course syllabi or courses. There was a similar situation with the general education outcomes associated with courses, which on the one hand were included in a broad sample of course syllabi, but on the other hand were not required (contractually) for inclusion by adjunct faculty. Likewise, it was not clear whether or how student achievement was consistently assessed, or how the resulting data was being used for improvement.

Information literacy, while not included as one of the main four core competencies, was discussed in the self-study as a competency focused on by library staff in their efforts to assist students. It is apparently not a competency that is addressed in or identified with specific coursework, but instead is a general ability broadly addressed across a wide variety of courses.

Undergraduate Degree Programs

Degrees are generally designed to give students broad exposure to a range of courses across the discipline, at both the introductory and intermediate level. BCC degrees are generally designed so that students can effectively complete them without any significant extra number of courses beyond 60 credits. The self-study notes that efforts have been started, through the academic governance process of the Educational Affairs Committee, to pare down credit requirements for degrees, where possible, to this 60-credit limit. A review of the program listing in the course catalog, confirmed in discussion with a number of college staff and faculty, show that this goal has not yet been widely achieved; a wide range of programs still require a minimum of 62 to 65 (or more) credits for their completion.

General Education

The 20-credit general education core of all Associate degrees is a minimum requirement and,

through advisement, students in some degrees have further flexibility (if not are required) to take additional general education courses. General education courses have been identified by faculty through the academic governance processes at the College, and in keeping with standards reflected by four-year institutions to which students might want to transfer. These are distributed across the traditional areas of arts and humanities, science and math, and the social sciences. These courses are identified in the college catalog, and students are advised by faculty and staff in their selection. Further, in addition to course objectives, general education outcomes are expected to be included in course syllabi, as verified by a review of a broad range of current examples.

As with the core competencies already noted, however, it is not clear how consistently these outcomes are assessed or how the (possibly) resulting data is being used for ongoing improvement of teaching and learning. On the other hand, the very act of making these outcomes explicit -- in the college catalog and in course syllabi -- was mentioned as a valuable step in and of itself to make explicit for faculty and students together the expected outcomes of general education course work. In discussion with faculty and academic administrators, it was however clear that they are anxious to become more deliberate and adept at assessment student learning outcomes.

The Major Concentration

Though the College as a two-year institution does not offer majors, as a part of the Massachusetts system of higher education it has developed and adopted "pathways" that are defined, discipline-focused degrees that serve as starting points for transfer into majors at 4-year institutions in the State. This is part of a statewide effort to define Associate degrees more clearly for students so as to aid in their timely completion of degrees and their ability to transfer most, if not all, of the credits they take at the two-year institution. These defined pathways have been in existence for several years and are a nearly routine part of community college offerings. At the same time, there have been discussions, but yet no specific action, about the development of "meta-majors" to further assist students in their choice and timely completion of degrees.

Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit

A review of the college catalog online resources verified that degrees and certificates are named in expected ways standard in higher education. On-ground courses at the College are the expected length of 50-minute hours per credit, 15 weeks per semester. Selected faculty at five local high schools teach some courses, and these vary in (longer) duration of weeks (generally over a year rather than one semester); length, content, and depth of course coverage are overseen by BCC faculty and academic administrators to ensure their college-level equivalence.

Efforts have been made over the past two years to see if course availability can be enhanced by providing sections on days of the week identified through student surveys as being preferred to the traditional Monday-Wednesday, Tuesday-Thursday format. While this change was with the hope of enhancing student enrollment, to date there has been no assessment to determine the effectiveness of providing additional scheduling formats.

Currently, the College offers three options for high school students to take college-level courses: through courses on the BCC campus; through completion of the second and/or third year of high school in attendance at the College with a reverse transfer of credits back to the high school; or taking courses at the high school. For courses offered at the five local high schools through a concurrent enrollment program, it is the faculty and academic administrators at the College who verify the qualifications of the high school instructors, the course materials (including syllabi), and the coverage of course content for depth and breadth. Several faculty at the College expressed the need to strengthen the process of vetting high school instructors and ensuring the college-level quality and integrity of the courses.

Students may receive credit for prior learning and experience A variety of means for evaluating prior learning are used: the portfolio assessment process supported by the State of Massachusetts; standard CLEP tests for specific courses; military credentials; "challenge tests"; partnerships with technical high schools designated by agreements at the State level; and industry-level credentials evaluated at the College. Students may earn no more than 25% of their credits for a 30-credit program by means outside of traditional coursework. In addition, college materials clearly note that at least one-quarter of a student's credits must be earned at the College.

Transfer credits are accepted at the College as long as the credits are determined (by faculty, program coordinators, and/or academic administrators) to be of the same quality as equivalent courses offered at the College. Further, the College has established transfer pathways that identify and guarantee transfer and articulation with four-year state universities in Massachusetts. These pathways are a product of faculty curricular work through a state-sponsored initiative (MassTransfer Strategic Initiative). Availability of such transfer options and procedures for their use are published on the college website and discussed with students during advisement.

As noted earlier in this report, the College reported that it has at least 11 degree programs for which students can earn at least 50% or more of the degree online. A substantive change proposal to incorporate these online programs within the College's accreditation was written in 2008 and approved by the Commission. Students who take the courses that make up these programs have access to advisement and support both online and on-ground through the same resources available to on-ground students. Orientation courses are provided for students in the learning management system (LMS), Moodle. The quality and integrity of these courses are reviewed, as are on-ground classes, by deans. Contractual oversight of online courses is carried out under a memorandum of agreement written by State authorities in 1998. As it has not been revised since, local colleges need to work around it in order to support faculty who develop and deliver online courses. At BCC, this work-around largely involves assisting faculty to develop and improve their courses through universal design principles. Further, they are guided in evaluation of their courses by resources created and refined by the Division of Teaching & Learning Innovation.

The College aims to ensure that the student receiving credit for online courses is actually the person taking these classes; toward this aim, a unique student ID and password are required to log in to the LMS (Moodle) through which the course is delivered. This login process also ensures the privacy of each student's work and online experience.

STANDARD FIVE: STUDENTS

Admissions

BCC is an open access community college requiring only a high school diploma or GED for admission to most programs. The College strives to recruit a diverse student population including traditional-aged and older students, students of color, veterans, and day, evening, and online students from Berkshire County and the surrounding areas including New York, Connecticut and Vermont.

Admissions information posted on the BCC website is clear, appropriately linked, and sequential so that prospective students should have no trouble accessing information and an application. The online Admissions Guide presents all necessary information including the application process, tuition and fees, Accuplacer testing, advising and course selection, home-schooled students, students younger than 16, veterans, and students requiring disability services.

BCC uses a combination of Accuplacer and high school GPA to determine math, reading and writing ability to place students in the appropriate classes. In addition to developmental classes—some of which are offered concurrently with the college-level course—the College also provides a variety of other types of support services for students. These include tutoring, support for students with disabilities, counseling and transfer advising, and a student success seminar (BCC101). BCC101 was developed primarily for students who place into developmental classes; however, the College is considering requiring the learning outcomes of the course to be embedded into gateway courses in all degree programs thereby allowing all students to benefit from this learning.

The visiting team was particularly interested in BCC's application of math anxiety research in helping its students overcome math anxiety and commend the collaboration between the counselor and math professor in addressing this issue. The team was also pleased to note the degree to which the College has been evaluating its new method of math placement and the revised curriculum/course pairings for developmental English. In both cases, the pass rates in the first college-level courses have increased and more students are enrolling in these courses.

The College's recently developed enrollment management plan is ambitious and, if accomplished, should be helpful in mitigating what seems to be a severe enrollment decline. The drop has been steady from 2010 to 2017. In 2010, the headcount (full and part-time students) was 2,730 with an FTE of 1,634. In 2017, the headcount was 1,847 with an FTE of 1,055. The Enrollment Management Committee has identified three primary goals:

1. Increase the number of new students.
2. Increase retention rates.
3. Increase student completion and transfer rates.

Each goal has a set of sub-goals. The team suggests that BCC might find it helpful to operationalize the plan by including specific action steps for each of the identified sub-goals. The

team also notes that, related to Goal 3, the self-study emphasizes the support received from the Guardian Life Insurance Company to provide scholarships for students with outstanding balances on their accounts. A financial literacy course is required for a student to receive this scholarship. While important, the College will need to rely on all of the means available to it, as mentioned in the enrollment management action plan, to enhance retention.

Student Services and Co-curricular Experiences

BCC provides a host of services that help students achieve academic and personal success and it has a robust program of student activities and athletics that allows students to pursue their physical health and wellness goals and take on positions of leadership. BCC has a robust program of club sports that is clearly subordinate to the academic program. The team was very pleased to note the flexibility that is provided to members of club sports teams as the College recognizes the busy schedules of many community college students that make it difficult to attend practices every day. Students do not need to be enrolled full-time to participate and students of all ages are welcome to join a team as well. In addition to activities that address physical wellness, the College has a Personal Counseling Center to assist students, either through direct counseling or referrals, who have mental health needs. The College's Behavioral Assessment Team (BAT) also provides assessment and intervention when the BAT is made aware of a student who might require special attention.

While the team recognizes that BCC's New Student Orientation appears to be highly successful, it agrees with the College that it would be desirable to increase the number of new student participants.

Several years ago, the Academic Advising Center hired three new Academic Counselors to replace retired faculty who had been serving as part-time counselors. The team notes that the new counselors were hired with Title III funding and is hopeful that BCC will be able to sustain these key positions over the long term.

The BCC website provides clear and accurate information regarding types of financial aid, the FAFSA, loans, and college work-study. The website clearly states that students may be eligible for aid regardless of full or part-time status and whether taking classes during the day, evening, or online. The visiting team notes that it would also be useful to increase clarity for students who take classes at locations other than the main campus.

BCC underwent a financial aid audit for the fiscal year ending June 2019. The single finding is already being corrected by the College.

The student services areas of BCC have undertaken several evaluations to determine their effectiveness. Areas that have been evaluated include tutoring services, the Writing Center, and new student orientation. In addition, the admissions process was assessed using a secret shopper service provided by the Educational Advisory Board, the SENSE Survey, and an survey for high school students following their campus visit. The Admissions Office, in conjunction with the Enrollment Management Committee, is looking at ways to streamline the admissions process and

make it more linear for students – a direct result of the secret shopper experience. The student services areas are encouraged to continue to undertake such evaluations on a regular basis.

In discussion with students, their love of Berkshire Community College came through loud and clear. They are immensely grateful for the support they receive from faculty and staff and they know, beyond any doubt, that the faculty and staff consider their success paramount. The students did raise some concerns about the four-day-a-week academic schedule and, as noted above, the College has begun to examine this scheduling pattern to be sure it meets the needs of the majority of students.

STANDARD SIX: TEACHING, LEARNING AND SCHOLARSHIP

Faculty and Academic Staff

The faculty of Berkshire Community College consists of approximately 55 full-time and 85 adjunct faculty members. The instructional workload falls preponderantly on full-time faculty who were teaching nearly 60 percent of fall 2019 courses. There are two full-time librarians supported by two library technicians on the main campus. The self-study lists two academic advisors as academic staff, though faculty also do student advising as part of their contractual responsibilities.

In general, the qualifications held by faculty, both full and part-time, are commensurate with institutional requirements. In 2019, 12 full-time faculty members possessed a doctorate or equivalent while 37 possessed a master's degree. The remainder of full-time faculty possessed a bachelor's degree, but these faculty teach courses in fields that require specialized skills. Berkshire Community College has a formal procedure in place to recruit and appoint new full-time faculty. The institution has retained a commitment to hiring full-time faculty members whenever possible even in the face of declining enrollment. Vacancies for full-time faculty are widely advertised. Search committees are appointed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs to select candidates to interview, conduct interviews and make recommendations for final interviews.

The search process for new adjunct faculty is less formal. An interview is conducted by department chair, program advisor, and sometimes the academic dean before an offer is extended.

While some adjunct faculty apparently believe their voice is not heard, BCC attempts to integrate adjunct faculty into the life of the institution. Over the past four years, the College has set aside more than $17,000 in stipends for adjunct-faculty development. The College has created a new position—the Adjunct Faculty Fellow—in the recently-established Division of Teaching & Learning Innovation. The Fellow is an adjunct faculty member who works up to six hours per week orienting and assisting new adjunct faculty in a variety of ways.

Adjunct faculty are not required, under the terms of their contract, to do ongoing service to the institution; they are, however, able to participate in department and all-college meetings and they often serve on college-wide committees. Berkshire maintains records that detail adjunct faculty member's length of service to the institution. Academic deans offer course assignments to adjunct faculty based on these records.

Two statewide union contracts determine salaries, benefits, and other terms of employment—one for full-time faculty (the Day Contract) and one for adjunct faculty (the Division of Continuing Education Contract). Thus, salaries and benefits are paid according to statewide norms designed to assure parity within the state.

While the contracts are the essential means by which the College defines faculty responsibilities as well as policies for evaluation, promotion, and tenure, other initiatives facilitate the integration of full-time faculty. New hires must participate in a semester-long program dealing with an array of topics associated with teaching and learning. Adjunct faculty receive orientation from academic administrators—deans and division assistants.

The College attests, through a variety of means, that it does not discriminate in hiring. Before beginning their work, search committees must meet with Human Resources (HR) staff or an HR designee in order to assure that search parameters are generally understood. Although the College has attempted to recruit a more diverse faculty, racial diversity among full-time faculty remains below five percent even as the student body grows more diverse. As a result, the president halted seven tenure-track faculty searches in spring 2018 because the applicant pool was not, in her view, sufficiently diverse. The College has modified its recruitment process to speed up the selection process and to advertise faculty openings in publications aimed at diverse audiences. These changes have resulted in more diverse applicant pools, but not yet in a more diverse faculty.

Faculty attend Professional Days that are regularly scheduled. Other professional development opportunities are provided through a fund that provides $5,000 a year, per academic division, for faculty to attend conferences and workshops. Berkshire provides an additional $15,000 for faculty professional development. Sabbaticals are also offered through the Day Contract; in the past decade, the College has funded 15 separate sabbatical projects.

While those who receive professional-development funds are encouraged to share the results of their activities, the College acknowledged that not all who receive the funds do so. The College self-study stated that the institution has plans to develop processes to assure the sharing of professional-development results going forward.

The Day Contract determines full-time faculty workload. Faculty, under the terms of the contract, the workload requires a minimum of 29 hours and a maximum of 35 hours per week, this includes; teaching, planning, office hours, service and professional development. Seventy-five percent of full-time faculty received release time of 2-9 hours in fall 2018 for non-teaching duties. In response to concerns about the distribution of reassigned time, the College created an eight-person reassignment committee, consisting of six faculty members and two academic deans, to recommend a more transparent and consistent policy.

Faculty advise a maximum of 19 students that requires, among other responsibilities, the maintenance of regular office hours. The average class size for the 2018-19 academic year was 10.1 students. In fall 2018, the College supported enhanced service to students by establishing an Inclusive Pedagogy Grant that encourages research in innovative teaching practices.

Tenured faculty are evaluated very three years, while other academic staff are evaluated annually. These evaluations are based on data that assess satisfactory performance in a variety of ways and areas. Evaluation of untenured full-time faculty occurs annually. Adjunct faculty are

primarily evaluated on in-class instruction. For both full-time and part-time faculty, assessment of performance includes a review of student evaluations and course materials conducted by the appropriate academic dean.

Teaching and Learning

Creation of the new Division of Teaching & Learning Innovation highlights the College's commitment to teaching and learning. The division replaces the old Center for Teaching and Learning. In addition to its work with adjuncts, the division has worked closely with the six new faculty hired in the 2019-20 academic year.

In addition to the Adjunct Faculty Fellow, a Faculty Lead, appointed for consecutive one-year terms, supports the division's work. The Faculty Lead receives a release of four courses per semester and works to facilitate assessment, syllabus design, exit learning, and creative use of Moodle, BCC's learning management system.

The College writes that, "Academic Freedom is a priority, as are consistent and verifiable learning experiences for students." Generally, faculty are free to choose their own teaching practices and course materials. However, in common courses such as ENG 101 and BIO 101 that are taught by multiple instructors, all faculty are encouraged to adopt common, identified course outcomes and objectives. In addition, all faculty are to follow a checklist in syllabus development that includes a variety of elements. One challenge remains; as mentioned above in this report, although full-time faculty are required to do these things, the contract covering adjunct faculty does not include a requirement for part-time faculty to incorporate these outcomes and objectives in their course content.

Though discipline-specific academic research is not a requirement in their evaluation, faculty are encouraged to grow professionally through a variety of available opportunities including stipends, support for conference participation, and, for full-time faculty, sabbaticals.

Berkshire has an Early College program that lets high school students take concurrent and dual enrollment courses allowing them to achieve college credit. The academic dean responsible is required to examine the credentials of high-school instructors, when used, to assure that they meet the expected qualifications for college-level faculty. These instructors are required to meet periodically with discipline-area faculty. Department chairpersons review course curriculum to assure that it aligns with college-level expectations.

Varieties of instructional models are in use. Since adoption of Moodle, though, the College has worked to encourage its adoption as a common instructional tool. The percentage of faculty using Moodle has risen by 15 percent since spring 2015.

To assure that content and methods of instruction meet academic and professional standards, the College participates in multiple statewide initiatives. It also relies on national research from a variety of sources. Faculty members also rely on discipline or program-specific organizations to maintain currency in their areas of expertise. In specialized programs, as well, the College

validates these efforts through articulation agreements with transfer institutions, and, in some programs, through requirements by external accreditors.

STANDARD SEVEN: INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES

Human Resources

As of November 2018, the College employed a total of 304 individuals. Of these employees, 174 are fulltime and 130 are part-time. This count includes 52 full-time faculty members and 81 part-time or adjunct faculty members. The number of full-time faculty employed by the College has increased by 7% since 2015. All College employees are encouraged to pursue professional development and costs are covered by the College when funding is available. However, there is a lack of procedures for supporting professional development.

In a voluntary and confidential Higher Education Insight Survey by the Chronicle of Higher Education, several competencies were assessed by employees. Among other results, the survey showed approximately 60% of employees responding indicated their department "has adequate faculty/staff to achieve stated goals." About 76% indicated supervisors made expectations clear to employees. The Human Resources Department is continually reviewing personnel files to ensure all job descriptions are updated and accurate.

The Human Resources Department maintains its policies on a shared drive which are accessible to employees.

Financial Resources

State appropriations provide $14.8 million of BCC's $43.2 million budget. Tuition and Fees make up $4.7 million, with the rest coming from grants, and auxiliary functions and miscellaneous sources. With that, BCC has sufficient resources to accomplish the educational mission of the institution. Financial records indicate that FY 2018 financial resources are accurately focused on the College's educational priorities. Expenditures for instruction, academic support, student services and scholarships represent the majority use of the college's operating funds.

The College has maintained a solid cash position even with declining enrollment, flattening state appropriations, and significant capital investments in campus infrastructure. The cash position for the College is currently at its highest level in the past five years. These reserves provide the College with a "cushion" to handle any unforeseen circumstances that may arise and can be utilized to support special projects. Even though BCC has a sound cash reserve, they have implemented caution in spending and made some hard decisions in recent years not to fill vacated positions to assure that the College remained debt free.

When creating the budget for the ensuing fiscal year, the CFO first prepares a budget based on the prior year's actuals that is presented to the President and Cabinet for approval. However, this

process does not appear to be as clear to the college community as one might expect; in fact, members of the community reported that they had no knowledge of how the budget was prepared or what their budget allocation was. Developing a set of guidelines and procedures, defined by transparency when creating the yearly budget, could possibly prove useful.

The College continues to receive a significant number of grants to support its academic programs and student support services, as well as to create an enhanced college experience, which, in turn, is reflected in the college's financial statement. In FY 2015, the College was awarded a $1.9 million Title III Strengthening Institutions Grant to support professional development opportunities, implementation of an early alert system, support for construction of a One Stop Student Success Center, and expanded resources for student advising. The College has also received other grants in recent years, including $752,000 for manufacturing equipment to support the Berkshire Innovation Center; numerous Performance Incentive Fund (PIF) Grants through the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education; and Skills Capital Grants that have provided funding for new equipment. Other grant awards include the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education grant and the STEM Starter Academy grant that provided funding for special programs and support services that otherwise the College would not have been able to provide.

Since there are mandatory and on-going Massachusetts-wide system requirements in the form of internal and external audits and evaluations, the college's finances receive continual analysis within the institution and through Board of Trustees oversight. The Division of Administration and Finance also performs regular internal reviews of its workflow processes, regulatory requirements and external audits.

The BCC Foundation has provided the College with $1.7 million dollars over the past five years. The majority of the funding is in support of student scholarships along with support to academic and other college programming. The BCC Foundation provides the College with additional financial strength and flexibility, even contributing funding towards construction and the college's infrastructure. The BCC Foundation believes in the mission and goals of the College and finds that they are in line with what the community wants to see from the College.

Information, Physical, and Technological Resources

The recent renovations of Hawthorne and Melville Halls, the new construction of the connector between them, and the overall beautification of the campus, has brought BCC to the next level of campus excellence. The buildings are now energy and accessibly efficient; they let in much natural light, have interactive classrooms, student collaboration areas and, most importantly, air conditioning. The Jonathan Edwards Library has been enhanced with the creation of the Digital Commons, Tutoring Services, Academic Technology Support, and the primary Computer Lab for student and community use. These changes have transformed the library to meet the needs of the 21st century student.

In conjunction with the above building enhancements, the College secured $950K in funding from the State of Massachusetts to upgrade to a state-of-the art fiber infrastructure, adding new IT data closets and the expansion of the college's Wi-Fi network. A new generator was installed to assure uninterrupted network and wireless access throughout the campus. A new phone

system, along with additional emergency phones and improved 911 capabilities, has been acquired as well.

Overall, the College has improved and progressed in the right direction to bringing much-needed Human, Physical, Information, and Financial resources to BCC and members of the College community confirmed that they receive the resources necessary to perform their duties in and out of the classroom. Yet, the campus might benefit from having better defined policies and procedures on how to go about receiving funding for capital upgrades to BCC's infrastructure, physical resources and information technology.

STANDARD EIGHT: EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Berkshire Community College recognizes the importance of academic assessment by building and strengthening its culture of assessment within all academic programs and across campus in order to move its assessment and quality improvement practices forward. Educational effectiveness and assessment of achievement at BCC is guided by its 2014-2019 Strategic Plan *Achieving Excellence – Transforming Lives*, most specifically within the Strategic Goal of Engaged Learning, which includes an emphasis on strengthening review of academic programs by using assessment data.

The creation of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (IE) coincided with Berkshire Community College's interim report for the Commission, showing BCC's desire and focus on their assessment of educational effectiveness. The IE office at BCC supports decision-making and helps faculty and staff in all aspects of assessment. It has created an extensive library of resources, including a Data Fact Folder that consists of various institutional reports and surveys that have enabled faculty and staff to incorporate data into their decision-making processes. The Data Fact Folder is available to faculty and staff through the college shared drive and it is used extensively by the Deans and Program Advisors. The Office of IE also creates and disseminates the Stumbling Block Report, which is used by the Deans and Program directors to aid in assessing their programs. This report highlights the courses students are taking by faculty member and their pass rate in those courses. Another example of a widely used report is the Section Enrollment Report & Historical Enrollment Report that is used to aid in determining the number of sections to offer

The College also participates in the group Advancing a Massachusetts Culture of Assessment (AMCOA) where faculty can share best practices in program and course level assessment.

Assessment

Berkshire Community College regularly engages in the assessment of student learning at the course, program, and institutional levels. The College has made substantial changes in its culture and practices around using and sharing data to improve educational effectiveness. Under the direction of the IE office, BCC is participating in external initiatives such as the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE) Data Center, the Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE), and the Voluntary Framework of Accountability (VFA) to benchmark

their effectiveness. These have been significant sources of data in moving the College toward a culture of ongoing assessment.

BCC depends on the design and implementation of effective processes for understanding what and how students are learning in their programs, courses, and at an institutional level. The College relies upon the professionalism of its faculty to ensure the student receives the same course experience regardless of its location or who is teaching it. The lack of structure and the reliance on the faculty to monitor itself is an area of concern for the College as, contractually, adjunct faculty are not required to have any student learning outcomes defined for their courses. Although the full-time faculty contract (Day Contract) does include a requirement that full-time faculty members have clearly defined and measurable student level outcomes for their courses, there appeared to the team to be a lack of consist implementation among faculty and programs. While the specialized programs and the courses that are part of the MassTransfer pathways have more consistent models for student learning outcomes and curricular mapping, for the rest there is room for improvement.

Since 2016, there has been a requirement that all programs have learning outcomes, but this has not been enforced and current program reviews require reporting of student learning outcomes. The administration recognizes this is an area of concern but does not yet have a clear plan to address the issue. The College has made efforts to internally align its high enrollment courses in Biology and English, but the College acknowledges that here, too, more work is needed.

As noted in Standard 4, to graduate with a degree, BCC has a requirement that students develop skills in four Core Competencies: Critical Thinking, Oral Communication, Written Communication, and Quantitative Reasoning. One or more of these competencies is/are embedded in courses and a grade of 'C' or higher is required for the student to be said to have developed that competency. The Registrar's Office is tasked with keeping track of student fulfillment of the four Core Competency requirements before completion of their programs. The evaluation of these competencies has resulted in targeted instructional and professional development interventions. This work, however, ended in 2014-2015 with the faculty's work-to-rule and has not been restarted.

Being part of the MassTransfer Pathways project, BCC is able to align its degree courses with other higher education public institutions in the state of Massachusetts. To date it has been able to complete this alignment work for some of the course areas, with the remaining programs in Mass Transfer expected to be in place by fall 2019.

BCC's externally accredited programs follow the assessment guidelines set by their respective accrediting bodies, and student learning is tracked annually through their success on required national examinations, clinical outcomes and employer surveys. Programs such as Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA) and Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) are required to monitor and report on the systematic evaluation of course and program-level outcomes. The College remains in good standing with the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE) with 100% licensure pass rate and 100% employment rate, receiving approval to run a yearly cohort of students, rather than a bi-yearly cohort. The College has done an excellent job in

providing the required support needed to meet the accreditation standards for these specialized programs.

With respect to the E-series forms, Berkshire Community College decided on Option 1 giving the team and the Commission an explicit view of how they measure the outcomes for each of their programs. As noted above, BCC also has a few specialized accredited programs, which they address in the E Series forms part b. External perspectives are provided by program advisory boards, national and state standards, and performance on national exams.

In general, the College has done a good job of developing student learning outcomes, but has had only modest success measuring student achievement of these outcomes. In addition, the College is aware of its reliance on indirect measures of assessment and plans to add direct measures of assessment of student learning as programs go through their five-year program review.

Retention and Graduation

As a follow-up to its 2014 interim report, BCC conducted a comprehensive internal and external analysis, which showed a decline in student engagement, retention, and graduation. BCC applied for and was awarded a Title III grant in 2015, which was directed towards integrating student services, engaged learning strategies, and redesigned advising services, all factors in student retention and graduation. Information on the Data First forms indicated that retention rates leveled off FY2016- FY2018. In 2016, 71% of freshmen were retained to the spring semester while 51% were retained to fall. In 2018, fall to spring indicated some marginal improvement--73%. Total graduation rates continue to decline. In 2016, there were 247 graduates of degree programs and in 2018 there were 212. There was an uptick in program certificates (in 2016, 76 certificates were awarded compared to 125 in 2018).

With the creation of the new Retention Committee, the College has started investigating retention by gender, race/ethnicity, and also developmental course enrollment. The information from the Data First forms indicates that while the retention rate of non-white students in Fall 2013 was 53% -- just 3-percent points below the retention rate of white students, However, in fall 16, the retention rate of non-white students dropped to 35%, almost 20-percentage points below white students. The College is aware of this widening gap in achievement and plans to make it an area of focus for the Diversity and Inclusion Committee in the future.

BCC also plans to emulate Bridgewater State University's model by building a regression model to better predict student retention and ultimately graduation and transfer rates. The work on this is just starting and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness hopes to have some results to share with BCC leadership by the end of the term (Fall 2019). The Office of Institutional Effectiveness hopes that improving its predictive analytics, along with its implementation of Tableau software, will help the College significantly increase its measures of student success.

The College used some of the Title III funds towards its gateway course redesign, which data show has had a positive impact on the completion rates of these courses. BCC aims to evaluate the impact of these changes with a SENSE survey.

As the College's programs are at different stages of maturity regarding the development and implementation of assessment practices and using results for improvement, an overall Institutional Assessment Plan that explicitly states assessment objectives could help faculty be more effective in demonstrating an understanding of what and how students are learning. BCC also understands that it needs to address the inconsistent requirements that exist in the formulation and assessment of Student Learning Outcomes between its full-time and adjunct faculty.

STANDARD NINE: INTEGRITY

BCC gets its legal authorization to operate from the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education. The website contains a values statement that includes, as the first bullet point, the expectation that members of the BCC community maintain a high level of integrity and engage in work that fulfills the college's mission.

BCC's commitment to the freedom of faculty and students to teach, study, examine data and scholarly research, and question assumptions is clearly laid out in the MCCC Day Contract and the Berkshire Community College Catalog. The College has clear policies regarding academic honesty that are also published in the College Catalog. According to the self-study, the College policies on academic honesty can be "found in many syllabi," but this practice is not currently required.

BCC has policies in place that assure non-discriminatory practices during the recruitment and enrollment process, and throughout a student's time at the College. Disciplinary procedures and grade appeal policies are designed to be fair to all involved. Similarly, employee collective bargaining agreements provide for non-discriminatory policies regarding performance evaluation, discipline, advancement, and professional development. The College's Diversity and Inclusion Council is in the process of re-forming and has several issues it plans to work on. Primary among these initiatives will be a faculty-led effort to determine whether certain classroom practices impede the success of students of color and a staff-led community/art oral history project telling the story of immigrants to The Berkshires. The visiting team was very enthusiastic about the work of this committee.

The various collective bargaining agreements that cover all categories of employees contain the policies and procedures for all college employees on how to file grievances and seek redress. The Student Policy Guide contains the student code of conduct and describes the disciplinary process. The grade appeal process is also contained within the Student Policy Guide under the heading of Student Grievance Procedures, which could be better labeled so that students can more easily access and make use of it if necessary. The team commends BCC for providing an advocate for students who undertake the grievance process.

BCC's self-study indicates that numerous institutional assessment activities have been undertaken and that several issues have been addressed. These include access to the Office of Transfer and Career Services, which has now been organizationally and physically relocated for

better service to students, and the creation of four new committees to address issues that surfaced from the Great Colleges to Work For survey.

One area of concern that affects issues of integrity and equity is that individual courses do not have a common set of student learning outcomes. As has been noted, not all syllabi contain course-learning outcomes and it is not a requirement for adjunct faculty to teach to specific learning outcomes. It is not necessarily the case, but is probable, that the evening students who are more likely to have adjunct instructors are the ones who may be impacted.

From reviewing the self-study, letters sent from the Commission to the College over the past decade, and the college's response to NECHE's concerns, it is apparent that the College interacts with the Commission with integrity and honesty.

Transparency

All BCC policies are available in the "About BCC" section of the website by clicking the link "Public Records and Disclosures"; it is only two clicks away from the home page. Once found, which may not be readily apparent to the public, it is highly comprehensive. As there seemed to be no link directly from the home page or other landing pages that clearly identified the College Catalog, this might also improve navigation.

While many policies were relatively easy to find on the BCC website, this was less true for those academic policies that related to students, for example information about a student's right to appeal a course grade and the process to follow.

The most recently audited financial statement, along with older financial statements and audits, are available under the Public Records and Disclosures tab from the About BCC webpage.

Information is consistent across formats and archival catalogs are available from the College Catalog home page. The College, though, has determined that relying exclusively on the webmaster to update the Course Catalog is problematic as one person cannot update the content quickly enough. Therefore, BCC is undertaking a process to train more faculty and staff to update the website so that information will be current. As a result of the self-study process, the College will link more important documents to the website for easier accessibility.

Public Disclosure

All of the information one would expect to see on the college website is available. A list of continuing faculty and administrative staff with appropriate information regarding positions at the College and degrees held are easily accessed from several locations on the College website. The names of the members of the Board of Trustees are also available on the College website.

Additionally, the institution publishes a description of itself, the student body, academic and non-academic opportunities, physical resources, and other features that are necessary to learn fully about BCC. All of this information is easily accessible from the College website.

All BCC programs have web pages that list, among other things, expected learning outcomes, the courses needed to graduate, and a semester-by-semester pathway to graduation. More difficult to find is the list of the four Core Competencies and the ways in which those competencies can be fulfilled. While they are contained in the BCC Catalog, they are not available on the website.

The BCC website publishes clear and complete information about the cost of education, net price, financial aid, and the average student debt upon graduation. The information is easily accessible and only a few clicks from the home page.

AFFIRMATION OF COMPLIANCE

To document the institution's compliance with Federal regulations relating to Title IV, the team reviewed Berkshire Community College's Affirmation of Compliance form signed by the CEO. As noted above in this report, BCC publicly discloses in its print College Catalog and on its website its policy on transfer of credit and 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 Berkshire Eagle, Alumni Newsletter, on the College's website. Copies of the institution's grievance procedures for students can be found in the College Catalog which is available online. The identity of students in BCC's online courses is verified using a system of secure log-ins and passwords issued by the College, and by face-to-face proctored exams. BCC's credit hour policy can be found in section in Standard 4: The Academic Program.

SUMMARY

Berkshire Community College used the Self-Study Process effectively to review several key aspects of institutional functioning. The College makes it a practice to obtain wide-ranging participation and input from the campus and surrounding community that has led to improvement, and commitment to improvement, in several areas including increased student retention and enrollment.

Strengths

1. In all of the committee's interactions with the campus and community, it was obvious that Berkshire Community College is student centered.
2. The College has invested considerable time and effort planning for the future. The 2014-2019 strategic plan and its successful efforts to address declining enrollments establishes a solid base for future growth and development.
3. The infrastructure of the College has seen significant modification and improvement including the renovation of the Hawthorne and Melville Classroom buildings. This, combined with future plans for the campus library, have added needed common and instructional spaces. The team was impressed with the care and maintenance of the facilities and the pride students and employees have for their campus.
4. The College has maintained a positive financial position while facing declining enrollments and flat state funding.

5. The Berkshire Community College Foundation is a strong supporter of the College, which chiefly provides scholarships to students. Foundation members volunteer their individual time, expertise and support to the College.

Concerns

1. In some cases, courses that have the same title and course number may not have common course learning outcomes. This difference was noted in courses that run during the day compared to the same course offered in the evening that is more likely to be taught by and adjunct faculty member. It would benefit students to have clearly defined course outcomes for common courses of the same title and number regardless of whether the instructor is full-time faculty or adjunct.
2. The College has made important steps forward in its efforts to utilize the data they are gathering to enhance institutional effectiveness. That being said, the communication of the data being gathered, and the processes being used to determine the data to be gathered would benefit from additional review.
3. The College has been effective in managing its budget in times of declining tuition revenue. However, understanding the budget and the decisions that are associated with it could be enhanced if the process to develop the budget was more inclusive and open.
4. Campus committees would benefit from having clearly defined roles and responsibilities.
5. The College lacks clear processes and procedures that will continue the professional growth and development of its faculty and staff. The Human Resources Department would benefit from developing processes, procedures and training for the campus community utilizing technology.