

Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students
of
ATLANTIC CAPE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Mays Landing, New Jersey
by

An Evaluation Team representing the
Middle States Commission on Higher Education
Prepared after study of the institution's self-study report
and a visit to the campus on March 26 – 29, 2006

The Members of the Team:

Elaine Ryan, Chair, President, College of Southern Maryland, 8730 Mitchell Road
P. O. Box 910, LaPlata, MD 20646-0910

Larry J. Adams, Dean of Virtual Campus & Instructional Technology
Harrisburg, Area Community College, One HACC Drive
Harrisburg, PA 17110-2999

Saul W. Katz, Dean of Continuing Education; Director of Community Relations
City University of New York, Kingsborough Community College
2001 Oriental Boulevard, Brooklyn, NY 11235

Margaret McGuire-Closson, Vice President, Student Affairs; Dean of Students
Northampton County Area Community College
3835 Green Pond Road, Bethlehem, PA 18020

Robert Pierson, Assistant Professor of Food Science and Technology
Delaware Valley College, 700 East Butler Avenue, Doylestown, PA 18901

Donn E. Pittenger, Vice President for Academic Affairs
Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology
750 East King Street, Lancaster PA 17602

Robert O. Ross, Dean of College Services, Tompkins Cortland Community College
170 North Street, P. O. Box 139, Dryden, NY 13053

James Sunser, Vice President, Corporate & Extended Learning
Onondaga Community College, 4941 Onondaga Road, Syracuse, NY 13215

Mary Louise Van Winkle, Interim Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs,
Adirondack Community College, 650 Bay Road, Queensbury, NY 12804

Working with the Team:
Iris Li Duffield, Administrative Analyst, Academic Affairs
New Jersey Commission on Higher Education, P. O. Box 542, Trenton, NJ 08625-0542

This report represents the views of the evaluation team as interpreted by the Chair; it goes directly to the institution before being considered by the Commission. It is a confidential document prepared as an educational service for the benefit of the institution. All comments in the report are made in good faith, in an effort to assist Atlantic Cape Community College. This report is based solely on an educational evaluation of the institution and of the manner in which it appears to be carrying out its educational objectives.

AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

President/CEO:

Peter L. Mora

Chief Academic Officer:

Arthur Wexler

Senior Dean, Academic Affairs

Chair of the Board of Trustees:

Brian Lefke

Context and Nature of the Visit

Institutional Overview:

Atlantic Cape Community College (ACCC) is a comprehensive two-year open admissions public institution serving the residents of Atlantic and Cape May counties in New Jersey. In response to significant and ongoing enrollment growth (currently nearly 6,200 credit students), the college has expanded its operations to include a main campus in Mays Landing and additional locations in Cape May Court House (the Cape May County Campus) and Atlantic City (the Charles D. Worthington Atlantic City Center). The recently completed Cape May County Campus will significantly enhance educational opportunities to an underserved area of the state.

The college offers a broad array of transfer and career degree programs as well as non-credit professional development and training services. The Academy of Culinary Arts allows students to earn AAS degrees or certificates in culinary arts and serves a rapidly growing food service and hospitality industry in the college's service area. ACCC has also established the Casino Career Institute which trains students to enter fields associated with the casino gaming industry. ACCC is a recognized leader in distance education.

A dedicated faculty and staff ensure that the college's programs and services are student centered. The college is to be commended for its strong culture of respect and genuine regard for its students.

A new president took office in July 2005. Dr. Mora, who has a long history of employment with ACCC, is generally regarded as a highly qualified professional who brings a strong focus on collegial decision making. He is seen as a positive force for change with a pragmatic approach to problem solving.

The primary areas of concern for the college's ability to continue to effectively achieve its mission are in planning and assessment of institutional effectiveness.

Scope of the Institution

Degree levels:	Certificate and Associate's
Branch campuses:	None

Additional locations: Charles D. Worthington Atlantic City Center,
Atlantic City, NJ
Cape May County Campus, Cape May Court House, NJ

Distance learning*: Associate in Science in:
Business Administration
General Studies
Computer Information Systems
Criminal Justice
Health Sciences
Paralegal Studies

Associate in Applied Science in:
Business Administration
Office Systems Technology
Accounting
Computer Programming
Computer Systems Support
Hospitality Management
Paralegal Studies
Associate in Arts in Liberal Arts

*Programs for which more than fifty percent of instruction is offered via distance learning.

Self-Study Process and Report

Atlantic Cape Community College chose to complete a comprehensive self study, with an emphasis on institutional assessment and, particularly, assessment of student learning. A broad cross-section of the college community participated in the development of the self study, with more than one hundred faculty, staff, administrators, students and trustees participating on various committees. A variety of methods was used to disseminate drafts and to solicit input from the college community, including the use of student focus groups.

Affirmation of Continued Compliance with Eligibility Requirements

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews, the team affirms that the institution continues to meet eligibility requirements.

Compliance with Federal Requirements

Based on review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews, the team affirms that the institution's Title IV cohort default rate is within federal limits.

Compliance with Accreditation Standards

Standard 1: Mission, Goals, and Objectives

The institution minimally meets this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings

The college provides two versions of its mission statement, one abbreviated and one expanded. The abbreviated version's first two bullets call attention to two key elements described in the expanded version. The last three bullets of the abbreviated version introduce language and concepts that are not addressed in the expanded version. The institution has had two versions of its mission for many years. It is not clear how or when one or the other or both are to be used. The abbreviated version has been placed on desk stands for use around campus, is used in the 2005-2006 Student Handbook/Calendar, and is posted on the college web site. The college catalog and the adjunct handbook display the abbreviated version and the expanded version. Neither the Planning Office nor the College Relations Office was able to cite any rules as to which statement was to be used when.

From these mission statements the institution has developed seven strategic goals that generally support the mission of the college and provide a broad base upon which objectives were developed. These goals call out specific elements of the mission that need attention and still provide the flexibility that will enable the college to address emerging needs. Under each goal the institution has listed several objectives; these objectives expand upon the ideas contained in the goal and provide a stronger sense of direction that should guide staff in making resource allocation decisions. However, according to the "Middle States Standards," "Institutional objectives are outcomes based and capable of being evaluated..." Most of the objectives published by this institution are not written in outcome based terms. Evaluation strategies that would help one understand success are not evident from the objectives, desired levels of outcomes are largely unknown, current levels of achievement are not stated, nor is there an institutional assessment plan in place to measure success in the future.

The self-study in several places refers to the institution's vision statement, yet it is not clear which vision statement is operative. Published with the College Plan is a vision statement (page 3). Most people interviewed thought that the current vision statement was the one that Dr. Mora used when he applied for his current position, which is referenced in the "Self-Study."

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices

The mission statements, goals and objectives appear to have been given wide distribution across the campuses.

Suggestions for improvement

1. If the institution is going to continue to make reference to its vision, then a shared vision statement should be developed using broad campus input.
2. A values statement is included in the Strategic Plan FY 05-09 but is not referenced in other discussions about planning. The college should determine if this statement is part of the college's statement of mission, vision, and values.

Recommendations

1. The two mission statements (abbreviated and expanded) should be combined into one simple yet powerful statement, based on broad input from the college and the communities that it serves.
2. Objectives must be written in clearly stated language that is outcomes based and is capable of being evaluated. These objectives are key to the development of an institutional assessment plan.

Standard 2, Planning, Resource Allocation and Institutional Renewal

The institution does not meet this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings

The institution has adopted a new administrative structure since the self study was completed. One of the stated primary objectives of the reorganization is to foster stronger adherence to the tenets of planning, resource allocation and institutional renewal outlined in standard 2.

The immediate history of the institution appears to be one that lacked a commonly agreed upon vision. The college has a strategic plan document and process, but it requires substantial attention. Measurement of outcomes is not evident and a clear understanding of the achievement of desired outcomes (versus other assessment approaches) is not in evidence.

The resource allocation model has been disconnected from any systematic planning used in the past and the new model has yet to fully take shape. Numerous individuals point to a previous culture where allocations were made on an undefined basis following individual meetings with the college president. It was not clear to the team that a strategic plan was being used to guide decisions and no means of measuring the impact of the decisions is evident.

Absent a clear plan, individual units have at times taken action to form their own plans. These plans do not appear to have been formally adopted at an institutional level and therefore lacked large scale “buy-in” and support.

Under the new leadership of the college, there seems to be a sense that a desire finally exists for systematic planning, resource allocation and institutional renewal. However, while an appreciation for the overall interest in adopting these philosophies seems to be present, employees express reservations about the college’s ability to improve in this area.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices

The college has commissioned a comprehensive facilities audit that will provide a high level blueprint for major campus improvements. The construction of the new Cape May County campus is complete and the site is open and operating with an extremely high level of satisfaction stated by faculty and students.

Suggestions for improvement

1. The college should make sure the academic plan and the facilities master plan processes are completed in a timely manner.
2. Confidence in the planning process should be regularly assessed and improved upon.

Requirements

Develop and implement a comprehensive institutional strategic plan that incorporates outcomes based objectives which links long range planning to decision making and budgeting processes.

Standard 3: Institutional Resources

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings

The college demonstrates varying levels of effectiveness with regard to this standard. In terms of human resources, the college has a record of promoting from within its ranks as well as hiring adjuncts to fill permanent faculty positions. This practice limits the college's ability to diversify its workforce.

Financial resources at the college have long been strong, but recent developments in state finances will likely stress the current norms and will require the institution become more proactive in resource development. Strong institutional planning will be necessary to help avoid an unhealthy level of reliance on student tuition and fees to balance future budgets.

Technology on the campus is currently highly visible and in good supply. Planning and measurable outcomes would help to ensure the college is best utilizing these tools. Campus buildings are generally in good condition and the Facilities Master Plan will be an essential element in moving the college forward.

Suggestions for improvement

1. The overall institutional practices of outcomes assessment should be strengthened to allow for effective measurement of successful use of resources.
2. Technology resources should be utilized to help reduce the heavy reliance on paper processes.
3. The college should implement a process for technology planning. This will be especially important in light of the increasing use of technology throughout the college.

Standard 4: Leadership and Governance

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings

ACCC has a well-defined system of collegial governance which outlines governance responsibility of administration and faculty. This is not currently available in one comprehensive document or publication, but adequately defined in separate documents which are available to the college community.

The institution has written governing documents, such as Board of Trustees Code of Ethics; faculty governance bylaws, committee charges, memberships, motions; mission statement; NJ Education Association Collective Bargaining Unit bylaws; NJ

Education Association Collective Bargaining unit minutes; Policies and Procedures; and Student Government Association bylaws.

There are written job descriptions for members of the executive team in the Human Resources office that have all been updated within the past year. There are clear organizational charts for the president's executive team.

The president has delegated responsibility and accountability for policy development and decision making among and between the senior team. Lateral communication, collegiality and civility appear to be replacing what is commonly described as a top-down decision making process.

There is evidence of a process for the involvement of appropriate institutional constituencies in policy development and decision making. A recent example is the invitation of the Chair of the Faculty Assembly/President of the Union to join with the Senior Dean for Academic Affairs to sit on the Academic Affairs Committee with a vote.

The governing body members are the fifteen members of the Board of Trustees – seven members appointed by the County Executive of Atlantic County, with the approval of the Freeholders, and three members are appointed by the Cape May County Board of Chosen Freeholders. The County Superintendents of Schools of Atlantic and Cape May counties are members of the Board by statute. The Governor appoints two members, one from each county. The Board of Trustees is chaired by a member elected by the body. To garner input on decisions that affect students, the Board of Trustees membership includes a non-voting student member. This member is a recent graduate elected by the student body.

Board membership comprises a diverse group, including one black male; six white males; one Hispanic female; one Asian male; one Asian female; and five white females.

The board has final authority over budgets and expenditures, and the president is responsible for internal administrative operations. The board has, however, engaged in limited policy development and most policies are a decade old. One-third of the board members are absent at any board meeting.

The board recognizes that its most important function is the selection, evaluation and retention of the college president.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

- There is a conflict of interest policy for the trustees updated 12/13/05 in Policies and Procedures which outlines the code of ethics pertaining to conflicts of interest for college trustees. It is the responsibility of the board member to identify

conflicts of interest; most often, an individual member excuses himself or herself from a particular vote or discussion due to a potential conflict of interest.

- In 2005, the board embarked on updating its Code of Ethics, including the submission of an annual financial statement. In December 2005, subsequent to the board's self-review of its ethics code, the acting NJ governor issued Executive Order 65 which essentially forbade trustees and college presidents to remain in office if they are in violation of any provision of the code of ethics. The board finally approved and implemented its revised code of ethics, along with Executive order 65.
- Board members do not receive remuneration.
- The board recognizes that it must advocate on behalf of the college and generate needed resources to sustain and improve the institution with the appointment of the new president and with input from the president – the board held its first retreat in January 2006 with a set agenda and a report prepared by the ACCT in Washington, DC titled: Atlantic Cape Community College-Board Self-Assessment Summary Report dealing with Board-CEO relations; Standards for College Operations; Board Leadership; Advocacy for the College; Board Education; Board's greatest strengths, major accomplishments of the Board in the past year; areas in which the Board could improve; and one or two most important changes they need to make to improve Board meetings an/or other functions.
- The board is creating and adopting a manual and handbook for orienting new members and making available continuing updates for current members of the board on the institution's missions, organization, and academic programs and objectives.
- The board, with the leadership of the new president, is developing a plan and program for the periodic objective assessment of the governing body in meeting stated governing annual objectives.
- The board appointed a new president in the Spring 2005 with primary responsibility for the leadership of the institution and is developing a presidential evaluation process. The new president has brought an enhanced sense of collegiality and shared decision making.

Suggestions

1. The board should pursue additional educational and professional development opportunities through attendance at local and state board conferences.
2. Board members should take greater responsibility for defining their processes and enhancing their effectiveness.

3. The board should conduct regular self evaluations.

Recommendations

1. The board needs to take a more active role in advocating on behalf of the college to the community as well as actively fund raise.
2. The board needs to regularly review and update broad college policies.

Standard 5: Administration

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

The newly appointed president is the Chief Executive Officer of the college and is responsible for leading the institution toward the achievement of its goals while being responsible for administration of the institution. With the reorganization of the Executive Team and the appointment of a Senior Dean of Academic Affairs and seven deans with the following responsibilities: Students, Administration, Planning and Research; Information Technology Services; Finance; Charles D. Worthington Atlantic City Center and Community Affairs; Continuing Education and Resource Development and Cape May County Campus and Labor Relations, the President has identified his team and given them a charge to pursue lateral communication, civility and collegiality.

The president has a thirty-one year history with ACCC and an appropriate academic background: Doctorate in Community College Education; a Master's in Community College Teaching; a Bachelor's in History and Economics and a Specialist Certificate in Economic Development. His professional training and previous leadership roles in the community college (vice-president; provost; dean; associate dean; professor and chair) give him hands-on experience and qualities appropriate to the institution's mission.

The president has appointed administrative leaders with appropriate skills, degrees and training to carry out their responsibilities and functions. Senior staff member personnel files, including resumes and most recent performance reviews, are available for review in the Human Resources Office. Of the eight members; three possess doctorates, one is in pursuit of a terminal degree, and the chief fiscal officer is a NJ Certified Public Accountant. The Chief IT officer, the dean of students and the dean of community affairs have master's degrees and more than 25 years each in their respective fields.

There appears to be qualified staffing appropriate to the goals, type, size and complexity of the institution. Each full-time vacancy is subject to detailed job opportunity announcements which outline duties and requirements. The Human Resources Department issues and monitors the "Personnel Requisition" form which

outlines the search procedures and requires budget and job data prior to posting. The respective senior staff member reviews and authorizes the job announcement prior to the advertisement. Most, but not all, employment vacancies utilize search committees. The president maintains final approval for finalists recommended for hire to the Board of Trustees.

There is a great deal of data to contribute to adequate information and decision-making systems to support the work of administrative leaders, though the use of that data for decision making is inconsistent. The creation of the Office of the Dean, Administration, Planning and Research and the newly filled Institutional Research position, which had been vacant for several months, along with an excellent technology department, allows the chief executive to create a vision statement and execute a plan to incorporate the Master Plan, Facilities Plan and Academic Plan that will drive financial decisions.

There is clear documentation (organizational charts) to clearly define the lines of authority and organization. Each of the major areas of the college has an organizational chart with names and titles.

The president is working with the Board of Trustees to create an assessment/evaluation instrument for the evaluation of his effectiveness. Once this tool has been agreed to and implemented the president anticipates developing an evaluation instrument to evaluate the effectiveness of his administrative team and their structures and services.

Suggestions

- Continue to develop consensus building, collegiality, and collaborative decision making processes.
- Data-driven decision making should be expected of all levels of the organization.

Standard 6: Integrity

The institution meets the standard.

Summary of evidence and findings

The college has a well defined set of policies on a variety of topics; these policies are posted to the college's web site where they are organized by functional area and are very accessible. However, most of these policies date back to 1996. The most recent policy addresses the "Code of Ethics Pertaining to Conflicts of Interest for College Trustees and the College President." In partial fulfillment of this policy, board members and the president are required to complete an "Executive Order 65 Disclosure Form"

(these forms are on file as required and work is under way to collect the “DCA Financial Disclosure Statements” from each board member).

The policy on sexual harassment is well publicized both in print and on the web. Procedures that allow students and staff to file complaints are clear and available. The of Affirmative Action Officer appears to handle complaints and concerns quickly and with concern for the rights and privacy of both the complainant and the accused.

The institution’s policies and practices with regard to hiring of full-time staff appear to be appropriate and well managed. Screening committees are used for all faculty and administrative positions; committee members are trained and interview questions are either prepared or reviewed by the dean responsible for the Human Resources function. It was reported that full background checks are made for all new hires. The hiring of adjunct faculty is left to department chairs with the result that screening and credential checks may not be as consistent or thorough as needed.

Policies related to ethics and the avoidance of conflict of interest have been developed at different levels of the organization, with specific policies in areas such as “Basic Skills: Ethical Guidelines for Faculty and Staff Working in the Developmental Programs,” “Curriculum Committee Statement of Ethics,” “International Education Committee Statement of Ethics,” “Academic Support Services: Ethical Issues,” and a Scholarship Committee Ethics Policy.” Documentation of a workshop on Ethical Issues of Faculty that was held in 1995 was presented; however, no recent training appears to have been provided.

The colleges purchasing practices appear to conform to policy. A centralized purchasing system is in place controlled by the Executive Director of Business Services. Use of formal bidding and quotations as described by the staff, should ensure that employees are not being influenced by gifts or favors from vendors. The path to selecting a contractor for master planning services was a model process. Here, an RFP was published; requests for proposals were sent to many different professionals; seven proposals were received which were evaluated against a predetermined set of criteria; and, from a short list of four vendors, the selection committee recommended one company to the college president.

In the Education Association Agreement, the institution has a clear statement on copyrighting and intellectual property rights.

The institution has well defined policies and procedures including forms and formats for the evaluation of staff in all areas. The Dean of Cape May County Campus and Labor Relations makes an effort to ensure that evaluations are completed for all staff on an annual basis. However, evaluations are not completed in accordance with policy or contracts. While most teaching faculty are evaluated annually, many other employees, especially those in the support staff, do not receive annual evaluations.

Policy on Plagiarism is well publicized in the college catalog and student handbook; policy is dated and should be reviewed. Based on interviews, it appears there may be more cases of academic dishonesty than reported as many cases are addressed informally, bypassing the formal procedures.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices

College Relations Department has a strong commitment to honesty and truthfulness in communicating with its publics.

The institution's commitment to a biweekly employee newsletter (Atlantic Cape Communicator) and regular publication of notes (Board Update) of Board of Trustees meetings that are sent by email to all employees helps ensure that employees are fully informed of important activities of the college.

The college is to be commended for its purchasing and procurement practices.

Suggestions for improvement

1. As personnel and benefits account for eighty percent of the budget and are acknowledged as the college's most important resource, employees should be provided regular feedback for performance recognition as well as improvement.
2. Consideration should be given to involving the Human Resources professional staff more heavily in the recruitment of adjunct instructors.
3. Faculty should be encouraged to use the documented system for handling cases of academic dishonesty.

Standard 7: Institutional Assessment

Atlantic Cape Community College does not meet this standard.

The fundamental elements of institutional assessment of The Characteristics of Excellence indicate that an accredited institution has a written assessment plan and process:

that is based on the institution's mission, goals and objectives;

that there is periodic assessment of institutional effectiveness that addresses the total range of educational offerings, services, and processes, including planning, resource allocation, and institutional renewal processes; institutional resources; leadership and governance; administration; institutional integrity; and student learning outcomes

that has the support and evidence collaboration of faculty and administration

that is systematic and thorough use of multiple qualitative and/or quantitative measures, which maximize the use of existing data and information

that uses evaluative approaches that yield results that are useful in institutional planning, resource allocation, and renewal

that has realistic goals and a timetable, supported by appropriate investment of institutional resources

that is periodically evaluated for its effectiveness and comprehensiveness

and uses assessment results to improve and gain efficiencies in administrative services and processes, including activities specific to the institution's mission

and has a written institutional (strategic) plan that reflects consideration of data from assessment.

Though various administrative and student services departments at ACCC have been involved in assessment activities, the Middle States Team recognized that the college's Middle States Self Study accurately reports that "ACCC does not currently have a written comprehensive assessment plan. There are not clear processes for data collection, institutional assessment, planning and improvement.

Requirement:

Atlantic Cape Community College must develop and implement an institutional plan for assessment

Standard 8: Student Admissions

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings

Based on review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to the fundamental elements of this standard:

Admissions policies and criteria are readily available to prospective students through the catalog, website and other recruitment publications. The enrollment growth has been substantial in the last few years and according to environmental scans should continue; at least for the traditional age student population.

Accurate and comprehensive information regarding academic programs, testing and prerequisites is available in the ACCC catalog, on the website, and via program specific publications. Programs with selective admissions requirements are clearly outlined in the catalog. Financial aid information is made available to new students via brochures and the web site. Policies regarding transfer credit and credit for extra-institutional college level learning are published in the ACCC catalog. Assessment related to satisfaction of services is evident.

The marketing plan does not adequately address the recruitment areas. While there is an overall enrollment goal driven by the budgeting process, there is no evidence of specific recruitment objectives as they relate to marketing and recruitment activities. Programming appears to be based on perceived need rather than analysis of available data.

The Faces of the Future Survey generated information relative to student satisfaction with services in the Financial Aid Office. The data was used to improve procedures and services. The college is beginning to look at students who withdraw from the institution to ascertain information for use in its retention efforts.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary innovative practices

Implementation of web based services has greatly improved access for students. The Jump Start program (a high school outreach program) is an excellent example of strong outreach to the community. It is comprehensive and provides direct links for students with the College. Students spoke highly of this program as well as the staff who administer it. The adopt-a-middle school program exemplifies the college's commitment to the community and underserved populations. Financial aid awards have grown along with enrollment while the cohort default rate has dropped.

Suggestions for improvement

1. Every effort should be made to assess the effectiveness of all recruitment programs to determine if outcomes are being met. Decisions about resource allocation should be based on data as much as possible.

2. The marketing plan should address the recruitment areas.
3. Recruitment objectives should be developed for marketing efforts and recruitment activities.

Recommendations

1. The team agrees with the college's own recommendation that data needs to be collected and evaluated with respect to students and the College mission so as to develop appropriate programs.
2. The college must publish its Student Right To Know information. Students must be aware of where they can obtain information regarding graduation, placement and transfer.
3. Information on student learning outcomes should be available to prospective students. A common definition for learning outcomes should be developed and a consistent way to make them available to prospective students determined.

Standard 9: Student Support Services

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings

ACCC offers a program of student services appropriate to student strengths and needs, reflective of institutional mission, consistent with student learning expectations, and available regardless of place or method of delivery. Policies and procedures exist for safe and secure maintenance of records. Published policies exist for the release of student information. Assessment of service as it relates to student satisfaction is evident. Students at the different sites and those enrolled in distance learning have access to student support services. The Student Handbook, catalog and website explain services and policies and procedures that impact students. Procedures regarding student grievances are noted in the Student Handbook. FERPA requirements are reviewed with new faculty at orientation.

The lack of a comprehensive athletic program (and fitness facility) was a concern noted in every discussion with students. Timelines and steps for addressing student discipline cases and appeals are not always honored. The composition of the committee is not well documented. The college's status regarding compliance with Title IX requirements is unclear. There is no evidence of outcomes based assessment of student

services. The academic credentials of some staff members in student services areas appear not to match those commonly found in similar institutions. There are significant discrepancies among constituencies about how student advising works. There are concerns about the levels of staffing in areas of student services given the growth in special needs populations.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices

Staff are passionate about their work with students. Educational Opportunity Fund and Student Support Services programs are meeting program objectives. Students speak highly of the institution and the attention they receive from the faculty and staff.

Suggestions

1. Given the projections of the rising number of high school age students attending ACCC, the college should consider its facilities and activities and their attractiveness to this population, specifically in areas of athletics.
2. The college should consider providing appropriate office space for staff dealing with confidential issues of students.

Recommendations

1. The college should address the due process inadequacies as they relate to policies and procedures regarding Student Academic and Non Academic discipline. Timelines for addressing appeal, and or next steps should be improved. Additionally, committee composition should be clearly noted.
2. The college should evaluate the Title IX requirements as they relate to current athletic programs.
3. There should be more use of outcomes based assessment to evaluate student services and its effect on student learning as well as to drive decision making regarding the implementation of services.
4. Evaluation of the qualifications of key personnel who work in Student Services suggests the college should encourage professional development and/or additional academic credentialing in some key positions.
5. Student advising needs to be addressed college wide and the process clarified.
6. The team agrees with the college's own recommendation regarding assessing the needs of the growing special needs population and the impact on staffing levels.

Standard 10: Faculty

The college meets this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings

All full-time faculty members are appropriately prepared and qualified. Educational curricula is designed, maintained and updated by faculty and other professionals who are well qualified. Professional development for faculty is documented and is adequate. Standards and procedures for faculty appointments, promotions and tenure all appear to be centered at the department level. Given the overwhelming number of adjuncts a more careful oversight of adjuncts is apparent.

There are concerns regarding the quality and diversity of applicant pools for teaching positions. Policies and practices regarding faculty management do not appear to have been reviewed in light of the dramatic growth in distance education.

Suggestions for improvement

1. A sustainable plan to increase the number of full-time faculty should be developed.
2. Develop a plan to foster more inclusiveness in the college community for the large number of adjunct faculty.
3. Take a more aggressive approach to developing a pool of applicants for all positions within the faculty.
4. As the distance education program continues to grow, consideration should be given to issues associated with the hiring, supervision and development of faculty who are not physically located on a college campus.

Standard 11: Educational Offerings

The institution meets the standard.

Summary of evidence and findings:

ACCC's educational offerings match its mission. Its geographic proximity to Atlantic City, New Jersey, presents it a competitive advantage for offering associate degrees in culinary and hospitality, and non-credit gaming programs of study Casino Career Institute (CCI). It offers a very strong allied health degree, specializing in nursing. The array of programs is appropriate for the geographic region and population served. The courses involve a wide breadth of study of sufficient length for the degree programs. Students often matriculate into four year programs and beyond. Programs are designed in a logical, linear progression to enhance student learning.

Goals and objectives are stated in every syllabus. Student learning goals and objectives are stated in departmental documents as well as being stressed in course syllabi. Periodic review of programs is ongoing. Advisory boards are consulted to help tailor curricula to the needs of industry. Internships enable students to understand their own educational possibilities with respect to jobs within the industry.

The library staff and faculty work in conjunction to facilitate student learning, and to improve the literary skills of the individual student. The library staff is committed to teacher involvement in the information literacy curriculum. However, a formal connection to the instructional program is not evident.

Library skills are taught throughout many courses. The professional library staff plays an important role on campus in teaching information-gathering, and the conduct of scholarly research.

Many courses are offered on-line as well as on campus. The two modalities are of equal rigor and are based on the same criteria. The two campuses provide similar services. Both facilities have libraries and similar support services for students (registration, financial aid, etc). Teachers seamlessly teach on all three sites.

ACCC has a published policy regarding transfer credits. Each case is analyzed departmentally, and accepted or rejected by the department chairs, except where articulation agreements exist. These policies seem to be applied in a consistent manner, and are easily referenced either on-line or in the college catalog.

The needs of adult learners are addressed on a thorough and ongoing basis. Adult learners form a large part of the college community, and flexible schedules of day and evening classes are available for adult learners. The college truly reaches out into the community to welcome non-traditional students to the classrooms and has continually expanded educational offerings by opening additional sites.

Course syllabi incorporate goals and learning objectives (many of which are outcomes based), but there often exists a general lack of understanding about how this should be applied to outcomes assessment. Some programs within ACCC effectively use outcomes to improve student learning although they may not call it such (including ESL, Culinary, Information Systems and Allied Health Services). Unfortunately, not all programs do so.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices

Significant accomplishments are found in the Nursing Allied Health major. Exemplary practices are found in the culinary arts program which sets the standard for high achievement within their certificate program for the geographic area.

Classrooms are outfitted with computers, screens and web access which considerably enhance the learning process.. Computer labs are modern, plentiful and efficient.

Lab facilities, particularly in the nursing department are excellent and modern. The lab facilitator is highly qualified and skilled, and uses innovative teaching techniques. The culinary laboratories are world-class. The library and its staff services on both campuses are adequate to its mission and goals and are supported by a professional library staff.

Significant accomplishments are found in Library Services. The college Library donates six hours a week of service so students receive live librarian support 24/7 (“Ask a Librarian”).

The college excels in balancing theory and practice. Innovative practices are being used to advance student learning through novel approaches in critical writing and reading skills. Collaborative team learning is also in evidence across the college.

Suggestions for improvement

Recommendations:

1. Assessment of outcomes is currently in progress and needs to be addressed in all programs in an expedited manner.
2. Recommendation to embed library/information literacy instruction formally into the curriculum in fundamental English courses

Optional Analysis and Evidence

Across the curriculum and specifically in syllabi, there is evidence of multiple layers of techniques to incorporate different teaching and learning styles. Students are expected to exhibit literacy in multiple modes of information – including the classroom, the worldwide web, computers and the library. Computer literacy is assessed and must be demonstrated to complete the degree program. The professional library staff has developed a student learning program to acquaint learners with the resources available in the library.

Standard 12: General Education

The institution meets this standard.

General education courses consistently meet the requirements for the three associate degree categories. General education courses incorporate study of values, ethics and diverse populations. Courses are designed for students to become proficient in

oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, technological capabilities appropriate to the discipline and (while not formally embedded) information literacy is addressed and includes critical analysis and reasoning.

With the notable exception of critical thinking skills, general education outcomes are not regularly assessed and improvements made.

Recommendations

The general education areas of the college have begun to implement a plan for outcomes assessment, the assessment of critical thinking outcomes, which needs to become a model for assessment in other areas of general education.

Standard 13: Related Educational Activities

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings

The institution has a strong commitment to developmental and basic skills as requisites for students to succeed. There is a well defined process for assessing student abilities and appropriate programs for remediation, if needed.

There is some ambiguity as to the applicability of credit developmental courses to meeting degree requirements. One developmental course may be counted as a liberal arts elective to meet graduation requirements in some degree programs, once the student has completed at least 60 credit hours of non-developmental courses. Some degree programs require more than 60 hours for graduation.

ACCC offers a wide range of certificate programs both for credit and noncredit which are consistent with its stated mission. The programs are evaluated regularly to help insure that they continue to meet students' educational needs and the needs of workforce development efforts. Student learning outcomes are clearly stated and published for the certificate programs.

There is a range of opportunities for students to gain academic credit through experiential learning activities. The institution has a process for administering these activities and methods to insure academic integrity for experiential learning. In some instances such as CLEP exams, nationally recognized standards are followed and in others for example, proficiency testing for computer literacy, appropriate faculty participate in assessing student learning. Procedures and standards for experiential learning are clearly published and readily available for students to utilize.

ACCC offers a variety of noncredit courses and programs to meet a broad range of community needs. The courses and programs are consistent with the institution's mission and goals and are evaluated periodically using established procedures. The college is considering a closer collaboration between academic divisions and noncredit operations.

The institution offers programs and courses on three campuses and at numerous other locations to meet special on-site training needs. Academic integrity is maintained at all campuses through the use of qualified faculty and program control by the main campus department chairs. Library services, technology infrastructure, and student support services are adequate on the three campuses with excellent technological connectivity among the locations.

The primary method of delivering distance education is via online courses. The institution has been recognized as a leader in the early development of online instruction.

Distance learning offerings have the same academic rigor as traditional offerings. Faculty and academic departments control and evaluate distance learning courses and programs including arrangements with consortia. There is no overall plan for distance learning offerings since responsibility is decentralized and any planning is thus part of departmental planning. Applicable legal and regulatory requirements have been considered in the development and offering of online courses. Training and support for faculty are ongoing and appropriate for online faculty. The Instructional Technology staff in particular has been consistently recognized for being open and eager to help in supporting online courses and technological innovation. There are currently adequate facilities and resources to support distance learning offerings and programs, but as enrollments and offerings continue expanding further resources may be needed.

The institution no longer has contractual arrangements with any outside providers for credit courses. A contract with providers in China was cancelled in 2005, but students are being provided the opportunity to complete programs already started.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices

The institution is a leader in the delivery of online instruction. The Instructional Technology staff are commended for their support of online faculty and introduction of technological innovation.

The institution is commended for its success in meeting the training and workforce development needs of the community through its many continuing education programs.

Establishment of full service facilities in key locations is commended as evidence of the institution's commitment to community development and enrichment. The Charles

D. Worthington Atlantic City Center and the new Cape May County Campus in particular are notable examples. The Cape May County Campus receives accolades from faculty, students, and staff.

The institution is commended for providing 24/7 online access to reference librarian services.

Suggestions for improvement

1. Continue to further develop collaboration between continuing education noncredit programs and academic divisions. There are potential benefits for students and the institution.
2. Carefully evaluate continued participation in the eArmy University program. In particular, the current agreement has limitations and conditions which may or may not be in the institution's best interest for managing enrollment.

Recommendation

The institution is to discontinue the use of developmental course credit for graduation requirements. The current practice is contrary to a fundamental element of The Characteristics of Excellence related to basic skills.

Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning

The institution meets this standard.

The initial activities intended to introduce the college community to the process of assessment of learning outcomes began in 2001, according to the draft copy of the Outcomes Assessment Plan for Atlantic Cape Community College. This effort was further supported by the Middle States response to the college's 2001 Periodic Review Report, which asked for a comprehensive Outcomes Assessment Plan by October 2003. This resulted in a series of efforts to educate all the constituencies across the campus, students, faculty, staff, and administrators, concerning outcomes assessment. An initial professional development workshop for faculty and staff on assessment was presented at fall orientation, followed by an additional workshop during spring professional day in 2003. In the fall of 2002 the Assessment Committee was established, with representatives from each academic department, plus additional administrative staff, to respond to Middle States. In October of 2003 the plan which had been developed was presented to Middle States CHE.

Since then, and to the present, the work of the Assessment Committee has continued and has included additional professional development workshops, communication of assessment ideas through the ACCC web site, newsletters, meetings of the department chairs, reports of the Assessment Committee and other activities. The Assessment Committee developed, with input from the faculty, administrators and institutional research, a pilot assessment activity which was administered in the spring of 2004. Following the analysis of the assessment results of pilot #1 and the process itself, learning outcomes for pilot #2 were developed and the assessment was administered in the spring of 2005. The results of pilot #2 were analyzed by the departments in fall of 2005 in preparation for the first of a three phase cycle of assessment of student learning in the spring of 2006.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices

The college has created an ongoing Assessment Committee, representative of the academic departments and the administrative staff, to direct the planning and development of academic assessment activities.

Recommendations

1. The college should ensure that expectations of student learning are clearly articulated at various levels: institution, degree/program, and course and for the relevant disciplines.
2. The college should build the assessment of the elements of General Education upon the model piloted for critical thinking.
3. The college should ensure and be able to document that the assessment of student learning is used to improve teaching and learning.
4. The college should accelerate its efforts to bring assessment of student learning to the point where it becomes an integral part of the institution.

Summary of team recommendations and requirements

Standard 1, Mission, Goals, and Objectives: *The institution's mission clearly defines its purpose within the context of higher education and explains whom the institution serves and what it intends to accomplish. The institution's stated goals and objectives, consistent with the aspirations and expectations of higher education, clearly specify how the institution will fulfill its mission. The mission, goals, and objectives are developed and recognized by the institution with its members and its governing body and are utilized to develop and shape its programs and practices and to evaluate its effectiveness.*

Recommendations:

1. The two mission statements (abbreviated and expanded) should be combined into one simple yet powerful statement, based on broad input from the college and the communities that it serves.
2. Objectives must be written in clearly stated language that is outcomes based and is capable of being evaluated. These objectives are key to the development of an institutional assessment plan.

Standard 2, Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal: *An institution conducts ongoing planning and resource allocation based on its mission and utilizes the results of its assessment activities for institutional renewal. Implementation and subsequent evaluation of the success of the strategic plan and resource allocation support the development and change necessary to improve and to maintain institutional quality.*

Requirement:

1. Develop and implement a comprehensive institutional strategic plan that incorporates outcomes based objectives which links long range planning to decision making and budgeting processes.

Standard 4, Leadership and Governance: *The institution's system of governance clearly defines the roles of institutional constituencies in policy development and decision-making. The governance structure includes an active governing body with sufficient autonomy to assure institutional integrity and to fulfill its responsibilities of policy and resource development, consistent with the mission of the institution.*

1. The Board needs to take a more active role in advocating on behalf of the College to the community as well as actively engage in resource development.
2. The board needs to regularly review and update broad college policies.

Standard 7, Institutional Assessment: *The institution has developed and implemented an assessment plan and process that evaluates its overall effectiveness in: achieving its mission and goals; implementing planning, resource allocation, and institutional renewal processes; using institutional resources efficiently; providing leadership and governance; providing administrative structures and services; demonstrating institutional integrity; and assuring that institutional processes and resources support appropriate learning and other outcomes for its students and graduates.*

Requirement:

1. That Atlantic Cape Community College must develop and implement an institutional plan for assessment.

Standard 8, Student Admissions: *The institution seeks to admit students whose interests, goals, and abilities are congruent with its mission.*

Recommendations:

1. The team agrees with the college's own recommendation that data needs to be collected and evaluated with respect to students and the college mission so as to develop appropriate programs.
2. The college must publish its Student Right To Know information. Students must be aware of where they can obtain information regarding graduation, placement and transfer.
3. Information on student learning outcomes should be available to prospective students. A common definition for learning outcomes should be developed and a consistent way to make them available to prospective students determined.

Standard 9, Student Support Services: *The institution provides student support services reasonably necessary to enable each student to achieve the institution's goals for students.*

Recommendations:

1. The college should address the due process inadequacies as they relate to policies and procedures regarding Student Academic and Non Academic discipline. Timelines for addressing appeal and/or next steps should be improved. Additionally, committee composition should be clearly noted.
2. The college should evaluate the Title IX requirements as they relate to current athletic programs.

3. There should be more use of outcomes based assessment to evaluate student services and its effect on student learning as well as to drive decision making regarding the implementation of services.
4. Evaluation of the qualifications of key personnel who work in Student Services suggests the College should encourage professional development and/or additional academic credentialing in some key positions.
5. Student advising needs to be addressed college wide and the process clarified.
6. The team agrees with the College's own recommendation regarding assessing the needs of the growing special needs population and the impact on staffing levels.

Standard 11: Educational Offerings: *The institution's educational offerings display academic content, rigor, and coherence that are appropriate to its higher education mission. The institution identifies student learning goals and objectives, including knowledge and skills, for its educational offerings.*

Recommendations:

1. Assessment of outcomes is currently in progress and needs to be addressed in all programs in an expedited manner.
2. Embed library/information literacy instruction formally into the curriculum.

Standard 12: General Education: *The institution's curricula are designed so that students acquire and demonstrate college-level proficiency in general education and essential skills, including oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, technological competency, and information literacy.*

Recommendations:

1. The general education areas of the college have begun to implement a plan for outcomes assessment, the assessment of critical thinking outcomes, which needs to become a model for assessment in other areas of general education.

Standard 13: Related Educational Activities: *Institutional programs or activities that are characterized by particular content, focus, location, mode of delivery, or sponsorship meet appropriate standards.*

Recommendations:

1. The institution should discontinue the use of developmental course credit to satisfy graduation requirement for some degrees. This is contrary to a fundamental element of the *Characteristics of Excellence* related to basic skills.

Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning: *Assessment of student learning demonstrates that the institution's students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional goals and that students at graduation have achieved appropriate higher education goals.*

1. The college should ensure that expectations of student learning are clearly articulated at various levels: institution, degree/program, and course and for the relevant disciplines.
2. The college should build the assessment of the elements of General Education upon the model piloted for critical thinking.
3. The college should ensure and be able to document that the assessment of student learning is used to improve teaching and learning.
4. The college should accelerate its efforts to bring assessment of student learning to the point where it becomes an integral part of the institution.