

**Report to the Faculty,
Administration, College Council, and Students of
State University of New York College at Cortland**

By

**An Evaluation Team Representing the
Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools**

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INTRODUCTION

The State University of New York College at Cortland is one of thirteen comprehensive four-year colleges in the State University of New York (SUNY) system. Established in 1868 as the Cortland Normal School, SUNY Cortland became a State Teachers College with four-year programs in 1941 and officially joined the SUNY system in 1948. In 1961 Cortland became the SUNY College at Cortland assuming the role of a college of arts and sciences.

SUNY Cortland enrolls more than 7,700 students in 59 undergraduate programs and 24 masters level programs. The College draws almost 98% of its students from within New York State. Located in a small rural city at the geographic center of the state, Cortland graduates the most teacher certification candidates in the state, and regularly ranks in the top twenty institutions in the country in this respect.

SUNY College at Cortland is a vibrant and productive institution of higher education. During the past few years, the College, with the incredible support and tireless effort of all campus constituent groups, especially the faculty and administration, has strived to assess and improve its programs and services to all of its stakeholders, most especially its undergraduate students. These efforts have produced many reports, recommendations, and suggestions culminating in the Self-Study document. Overall, the institution is doing a very good job in meeting the standards articulated in the Middle States Association's *Characteristics of Excellence*, but if SUNY College at Cortland is to fulfill its vision for the future, it must soon put into action its plans, taking advantage of the outstanding commitment and tireless efforts of faculty, staff, students, administrators and others to enhance the College's mission, programs, and reputation.

The College is fortunate to have a president who has fostered a climate of open communication and shared governance with key stakeholders. The broad participation of faculty, staff, students and administration in the self-study process is illustrative of this climate.

The College chose to use the self-study model "comprehensive with areas of special emphasis." The emphasis areas chosen were: Planning and Assessment; Equity, Access and Diversity; Intellectual Climate; Technology; Institutional Context (Internal and External); and

Infrastructure. The Visiting Team does not attempt to address each of the recommendations contained in the Self-Study, but we do underscore, and, in some cases, elaborate on some of them, as well as offer additional suggestions or recommendations.

COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

Academic Programs and Services

The academic programs of the College are offered through the School of Arts and Sciences and the School of Professional Studies, with each school administered by a dean who reports to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. The College has developed and maintains a wide range of high quality academic programs. Its faculty, professional staff and administration are highly qualified, caring and dedicated to its mission.

Cortland seems at present to be going through “evolving pains.” While the school’s history of excellence in teacher education continues, its mission as a comprehensive college of arts and sciences offering programs in the liberal arts and a variety of professional programs continues to evolve. On the one hand, the general education courses taught by Arts and Sciences help fulfill that element of the school’s mission and identity, while on the other hand, Professional Studies teaches and advises twice as many majors (mostly in education and physical education) as do their Arts and Sciences colleagues. The resulting disparity can seem to favor one school or the other. If Arts and Sciences has a counterpart perception (or lament), it is implicit, imbedded in the statistics: 61% of total student credit hours are generated in Arts and Sciences (largely due to the general education requirement), compared to 39% in Professional Studies. Academic departments in the Arts and Sciences can sustain their low-enrolled majors programs (many of which are crucial to the institution’s stated mission) by teaching the required service courses, but they cannot be happy to sacrifice their discipline on the altar of service.

The disparity in teaching and advising workload is clearly of concern to the faculty. Teaching load maximums or guidelines are not stipulated in the faculty union agreement. As Cortland noted in the Self-Study: “One issue that still requires attention is the perceived workload discrepancies between schools. ... those workload discrepancies that do exist are not between schools as much as they are between departments, both within and between schools. Regardless of the particular comparisons being made, however, disproportionate workloads are not beneficial to the institution or its faculty.”

To the credit of the College administration, creative measures are being taken to address the imbalance and to acknowledge the perceived inequity as a real issue. The combination of enrollment management (limiting admissions on the Professional Studies side; actively recruiting potential Arts and Sciences majors on the other side, consistent with the Title III grant), teaching load adjustments, and providing assistance with advising are laudable, but whether considered individually or collectively, they may not fully resolve the perceived inequity.

Another significant adjustment in the academic programs area involves the recent dramatic

turnover in faculty arising from *en mass* retirements and the institution's response to them. While conversion of part-time positions to non-tenure-track, full-time lecturer positions may seem less than ideal at first consideration, the existing plan to fill tenure-track lines on an established schedule augurs well for the long range future of Cortland's academic programs. Many people interviewed during the Middle States team visit noted how the hiring of new Ph.D.'s has already renewed the energy and dedication of senior colleagues. The administration's plan for renewing and reshaping the faculty through judicious use of full-time lecturers and new tenure-track faculty seems a realistic response to the challenges of demographics and budgetary constraints. The faculty concerns cited earlier were candidly included and clearly articulated in Cortland's Self-Study report--that willingness to acknowledge challenge and to seek solutions should be deemed a commendable strength.

The strengths of the academic programs are manifestly multiple and commendable. As reflected in the congruence among stated departmental objectives and the institutional mission statement, the personnel who staff the programs seem especially mindful of goal-setting and outcomes assessment in their Self-Study documentation. To the extent that the academic programs at Cortland are "in flux," they are also robust in serving the two masters of the marketplace and the academy.

Cortland has shown remarkable resiliency in its adjustment to the challenges the school faces. Strong leadership has been the crucial factor in that progress. Such daunting challenges as faculty teaching and advising loads, faculty hiring patterns, and program development can sustain the continuing correlation of Cortland's dual strengths in professional studies and comprehensive liberal education.

RECOMMENDATION: The Visiting Team endorses the recommendation in the Self-Study Report, "that the provost should establish a task force to analyze faculty workload across departments and schools and make recommendations where appropriate for addressing problem areas with opportunities provided for campus-wide discussion."

Enrollment Management

One of the *Characteristics of Excellence* emphasizes the need for an institution to state its mission, goals and objectives clearly. In 1996, the President reorganized the management team to make it possible for enrollment management to focus on diversifying the student population to better represent students throughout the state of New York, as well as to increase the international population. At the same time, the charge to the enrollment management unit was to recapture enrollment losses experienced during the previous five years. At the present time, head-count enrollment is the highest in the College's history and the retention rate continues to increase. The Self-Study also reports on the increase in the diversity of students who have been attracted to the institution since this effort began.

While the enrollment team has been successful in reaching its objectives to increase the

enrollment, including students of diverse backgrounds, the goal of involving all units of the College in the recruitment and retention process remains a challenge. As a result of increasing student enrollment, students have expressed concern regarding their ability to enroll in the classes they want, obtain advisement, and negotiate the registration process.

Concerns about the registration process are likely to decline when the new web-based registration is implemented this spring. While there will remain challenges in bringing up this system and refining the degree audits, students seem excited about the opportunity to register on-line. Students are also aware of efforts being made to improve the advising process that have been made possible through the Title III Grant. More staffing and better advisor training are planned for the future.

There continues to be a feeling among some faculty that students being admitted now are not well prepared to do college work. Evidence provided by the Enrollment Services office clearly demonstrates the retention rate between first and second year students is going up each year, e.g. from 72% to 76% since enrollment increased. Further, data demonstrate an increase in the number of applications making it possible to be even more selective in the future. In fact, the quality of the student body is strong and improving.

We commend the College's effort to increase the number, quality and diversity of its students. We support the Self-Study recommendation to "reaffirm explicitly that recruitment is not the sole responsibility of the Admissions Office, further delineate the roles to be played in this process by deans, department chairs, and faculty, and encourage collective engagement in the process."

While these enrollment efforts have enjoyed success, the Team suggests that the institution continue to evaluate the effects of growth on all units of the College. Several concerns were brought to the attention of the Team which might need further consideration as the College plans for the future. For example, the Financial Aid area is concerned about the increased demands from students and parents on staff time.

The Enrollment Management staff has demonstrated vision and dedication in meeting the College's goals of increased selectivity, diversity and student enrollment. They see the need for the institution to place a high value on retention efforts and increasing graduation rates.

SUGGESTION: The Team endorses the Self-Study's recommendation to "conduct a needs analysis to determine the adequacy of resources across enrollment management, to include examination of the need for an inquiry management position and an additional financial aid advisor, professional development and training needs, adequacy of clerical staff, and the need for temporary summer staffing."

SUGGESTION: The Visiting Team suggests that the College develop and implement an enrollment planning process that identifies and connects program capacity, institutional resources, and faculty, staff and student needs.

Faculty and Staff

The target of 80% of courses to be taught by full-time faculty by 2004 that was enunciated in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with SUNY is laudable. Progress has been made as reflected in the 23.5% growth in the percentage of full-time faculty from 1996 to 2001. Sixty-seven percent of all classes in the Fall 2000 semester were taught by full-time faculty.

One strategy used by the College to better serve students, and reach the 80% target, was the creation of 23 full-time non-tenure-track lecturer positions that do not require a terminal degree. All 23 individuals hold at least a master's degree. Faculty members occupying these positions do not participate in departmental or college-wide advisement activities. Nevertheless, these faculty members, appointed for up to three years at a time, are provided office space and some attend departmental meetings. While these faculty are recognized by the College community as competent and conscientious individuals in the classroom, students have stated that they would like to have opportunities to further interact with them.

The College has made excellent progress in its efforts to hire more women, especially among the faculty. It has been less successful in attracting and retaining African-American, Hispanic and Asian American faculty. As noted in the Self-Study, there are no ethnic minorities on the library staff.

The major and most compelling concerns of the faculty are driven by the MOU mandates, NCATE certification requirements, the faculty's perceptions of teaching load disparity between Professional Studies and Arts and Sciences and the need to achieve the 80/20% ratio for courses taught by full-time faculty relative to part-time faculty. At the same time, approximately fifty percent of the full-time faculty has turned over primarily due to retirement packages offered by SUNY. This significant reduction in the senior teaching faculty and the employment of younger faculty has created several new priorities for the College. There is a need to mentor younger faculty during their initial years at Cortland and to employ creative strategies for rewarding seasoned and experienced faculty who will do the mentoring. There is also the need to find ways to reduce the teaching load of new and younger faculty members during their initial years at Cortland to help them become involved in research projects and in professional organizations.

In spite of these identified areas of concern, the Team was impressed by the faculty's competence, professionalism and dedication in their efforts to fulfill their professional, pedagogical and advisory obligations to students. Many faculty serve on multiple campus committees having to do with preparation for this Middle States visit, NCATE accreditation, New York State Education Department (NYSED) re-registry, accomplishing targets established in the MOU, and working to realize the twelve learning outcomes for the SUNY general education program requirement through the Advisory Task Force on General Education. Their strong sense of commitment and dedication to Cortland is evident.

In a relatively short time, the Provost has demonstrated a strong grasp of many key issues facing the College relative to faculty recruitment, student recruitment, diversity and the MOU mandates. Her vision for effectively resolving these issues while continuing Cortland's quest for professional excellence is to be lauded.

SUGGESTION: Cortland should continue its efforts to reach the desired balance of courses taught by full-time and part-time faculty. The hiring of tenure-track faculty to replace those departing should continue; support for the professional development of faculty should be provided.

Student Affairs

The mission of the Student Affairs division states, "It is committed to the personal, social, intellectual, emotional, ethical and career development of students." The mission statement is congruent with the *Characteristics of Excellence* and the College's mission statement.

The Student Affairs staff has developed and maintains many strong programs and services to support student development. These services and programs are offered to support the staff's philosophy that participating in extra-curricular and co-curricular activities serves to provide students with the opportunity for growth and development beyond the classroom. The students appeared to be very friendly, very satisfied with the services they experience and believe they are getting a very good education.

The College offers new students an outstanding first year experience. Goals are set, accomplishments are measured and the results are used to improve services. All new students are required to take an orientation course. During the year, special programs offered to freshmen are focused on helping them to learn how to be successful students.

The College is attempting to increase its multicultural programs and services for students of color. There is a staff member who spends much of her time providing assistance for these students and developing social opportunities for students to become more involved in campus life.

One of the greatest areas of concern for Student Affairs is its lack of ability to meet all the needs of over four hundred students with disabilities. These students require special counseling and learning assistance in order to be successful. Several programs are trying to offer these students assistance (e.g., the Academic Support Services, Counseling, and Career Services). We support the College's efforts to expand services to these students.

The staff members of the College Center are resourceful in finding funds to offer students an array of cultural and social events. There is a limit to what can be done because of limited funds and staff resources. However, by collaborating with different groups, seeking grants to provide programs, and by working with students and staff, the Corey Union seems to be a popular place

in which students can enjoy each other and also enjoy wonderful events throughout the year. The Tomik Fitness Center is another venue heavily used by students each day. These and many other activities that are available to students provide evidence that the College seeks to promote the comprehensive development of its students, in keeping with the *Characteristics of Excellence*.

The Division has been involved in assessment efforts over a long period of time. Results of these efforts have led to a number of changes in organization and program adjustments. One of the major concerns of the Division as reported in the self-study and reported to the Team is the way it is funded. The Division is largely dependent on student fees. Very little money is available for student development programming. The Team observed that office space and location of offices are not always convenient for students. Two important space needs identified by the Self-Study are residence hall and recreational spaces. While a new residence hall is not currently being constructed, several older halls are being renovated, enhancing the comfort level for students and the appearance of these facilities.

The Division has two units that deserve special recognition. Both the Counseling and Health Services are accredited programs and provide quality services for the students. The College Police Department was reviewed by the N.Y. State University Police and was commended for its dedication and the talent of its employees.

The results of the student opinion survey administered for all SUNY campuses indicate that most student affairs goals and objectives are being met. The Team commends the Student Affairs staff for its loyalty and dedication to their work. The staff believes firmly in the value of learning outside the classroom. Because of this deep commitment they continuously seek ways to better these services on behalf of students. The Team believes the staff at Cortland is well prepared for changes that may take place in the future and encourages the staff to continue with their assessment efforts.

Student conduct, drinking and drug use are presently concerns on this campus. More study will need to be done to understand the causes of such behavior. The Self-Study report raised concerns about the lack of resources to provide “preventive education, alternative social programming, student leadership development and cultural programming.” We would suggest that more focused attention be given to providing programs that engage students in a positive life style.

SUGGESTION: One of the strengths of the Student Affairs Division is its professional staff who are dedicated and committed to serving the needs of students. The staff has demonstrated the capacity to offer many programs and services within its limited resources. We suggest that the staff consider other alternatives for supporting programs and services by seeking grant funding for specific programs, i.e., the arts, service learning, alcohol/abuse education; examining the organizational structure; engaging graduate assistants; or collaborating with other divisions on campus and/or community constituencies.

SUGGESTION: On-campus residence halls contribute to the quality of life for all students. It is through relationships built when interacting with others in this setting that attitudes are developed, opinions are formed, and personal growth takes place. Unfortunately, crowded conditions in a residence hall often lead to negative behaviors that detract from these intended outcomes. The Team suggests that the College complete its analysis of housing options and implement a plan to alleviate overcrowding in the residence halls.

Institutional Advancement

Institutional Advancement is presided over by a vice president and is comprised of four components: The Cortland College Foundation, the Office of Alumni Affairs, the Office of Public Relations and the Office of Publications and Electronic Media. The Office has responsibility for staffing and promoting College interests through the Cortland College Foundation and the Cortland College Alumni Association.

The goal of the Office is to build support for the College's mission by raising external (non-state) funds and articulating the mission through a communications program designed to engage alumni, parents, legislators, donors and prospective students. The College is in the beginning phase of the public portion of its first capital campaign.

Institutional Advancement recognizes its role as a necessary and growing part of the future of the College. As state funds become more scarce, the need for external support is more evident and growing. The Office sees itself as serving to promote the interests of the College and growing the financial and influence support base.

The Institutional Advancement area has a well qualified and dedicated staff, each of whom has the appropriate training and experience for her or his role. The staff works well together and are comfortable in their respective roles.

The capital campaign appears well designed and is on track. The Vice President and the directors have cultivated strong relationships with the Foundation and with the Alumni Association. The Alumni Association Board and the Foundation Board have clearly defined roles and work effectively toward shared goals.

There is no clear means of involving current faculty and staff in Advancement decisions and functions. The connection between Advancement and other campus programs will become more important as the present campaign progresses and future campaigns are planned. There is also a need to develop an expectation of giving among current students.

The Visiting Team commends the College for its recognition that institutional support must go beyond the traditional sources of state appropriation and tuition and for its development of an institutional advancement program and staff.

Finance and Management

The overall financial resources available to SUNY Cortland include funds appropriated by the State for direct operations; special State funds for targeted improvements (e.g., equipment and capital projects); the Auxiliary Services Corporation (ASC) (food services and bookstore operations among others); and Income Fund Reimbursables (IFR) that includes student fees, and Dormitory Income Fund Reimbursables (DIFR) which includes income from residential facilities. Each of the various revenue sources has separate rules governing the collection and use of such funds. For the fiscal year 2001-2002, the total resources were approximately \$96.9 million. Of this total, the State support for operations, net of tuition receipts, but inclusive of an allocation for the cost of fringe benefits is \$24.5 million or 25.3%. Over the last several years, the College has managed to develop a reserve of approximately \$5 million that has been the result of careful control of expenditures, salary savings from turn-over in faculty and increased enrollment.

The SUNY system uses a formula approach to funding (Performance Based Budget Allocation -- PBBA) in which a 12 cell matrix is used to array the full time equivalent students with a fund level associated with each cell. The headings of the cells are program cost (low-medium-high) on one side and level of education (lower division, upper division, beginning graduate and advanced graduate) on the other. Cortland notes in its Self-Study that its programs tend to be categorized as "low-cost" and that this has a negative impact on the amount of support the College can expect from the State.

The College reports that it has been developing a new budgeting system that will be more decentralized than is currently in place. It should be noted that the present system has resulted in the allocation of funds to areas of high priority. As discussed with college personnel, Cortland allocates budgets for a total number of positions that exceeds the dollar amount available, but that are expected to be covered from budgetary savings during the course of the year, primarily through salary savings. The College's financial affairs have been managed so as to not exceed the available resources.

The leadership in the financial management area is committed to the support of the College's academic mission. However, the Self-Study reports that the limited number of staff will hinder the ability of its units to be fully responsive. Limited funding over the years has put stress on personnel, constrained Other than Personnel (OTP) expenditures and generated significant deferred maintenance.

SUGGESTION: The College should continue its review of the budgetary process discussed in its Self-Study. The review may be broadened to include issues that have arisen in many areas of the College. For example, the goal of 80% of courses taught by full-time faculty will have budgetary implications. It may be helpful for the college to prepare projections of several scenarios which can model such factors as enrollment changes, changes in residential capacity and new academic

programs and the impact of these factors as claims on or generators of resources.

RECOMMENDATION: The College has developed great expertise in the process of assessment and planning. Several groups expressed uncertainty about how outcomes would be converted into institutional priorities with associated resource allocations. There is a need to further empower appropriate levels of management within the College. The College is therefore urged to act upon its recommendation to continue to decentralize the budget, enabling the provost and deans to have increased budget and position control. The process should have sufficient checks and balances to ensure that the College continues also to maintain the growth in its reserves, protecting it from future fiscal uncertainty.

SPECIAL EMPHASIS REVIEW

Planning and Assessment

Cortland's sustained effort and success in institutionalizing planning and assessment in major programs, general education and support areas is impressive. In the past decade, it has truly progressed from laggard to leader. Currently completing its third round of comprehensive institutional planning with the publication of the 2000-2001 Long Range Planning Report, all organizational units of the College engage in the development of goals, objectives, plans, and actions in support of SUNY Cortland's mission, and, equally important, in the application of assessment measures to gauge the success of the planning process. Notably, all constituencies of the College are involved in the planning process through the Long Range Planning Committee, a standing committee of the Faculty Senate, working in cooperation with the President's Council and assisted by eight action plan working groups composed of faculty, staff, and, most recently, a few students.

The notable progress made in the area of planning and assessment should be reinforced by three recent and significant steps: (1) the President's decision to require that requests for additional budget allocations be linked to specific long range planning goals appearing in the Planning Report, (2) the organization of the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment to facilitate the development of college-wide assessment plans, and (3) the leadership role of the College Assessment Committee to initiate and enhance assessment endeavors across the institution.

The Visiting Team was favorably impressed with the assessment of general education through the systematic evaluation of essays in the General Education program's eight categories, and the successful endeavors of many of the academic departments to engage in a wide variety of interesting and successful learning outcomes assessments, running the gamut from senior seminar projects to portfolios to pre- and post-tests, as best fit the demands of the academic discipline. It appears, however, that a few academic departments remain to be fully converted. No doubt the linking of budget to assessment, and the inclusion of participation in assessment activities in the annual Discretionary Salary Increase, will provide the prodding necessary to complete the conversion.

The Visiting Team agrees with the Self-Study recommendation that SUNY Cortland should begin to use the results of its various assessment techniques to derive suggested program improvements that are, in turn, included in the planning cycle. Likewise, SUNY Cortland should proceed with its plans to investigate the perceived value of its educational programs in the eyes of its graduates and their employers.

The cooperative working arrangement between the Faculty Senate's Long Range Planning Committee and the President's Council appears to be an effective and appropriate vehicle to continue the institution's progress in planning and assessment, especially in light of the recently initiated link between planning and budgeting. Likewise, SUNY Cortland, through the leadership of the College Assessment Committee, has achieved considerable success in implementing successful learning outcomes assessment and in spearheading an innovative approach in assessing general education. Similarly, discussion with members of the Long Range Planning Committee demonstrate that they are appropriately attuned to the nuances of carrying out the delicate balancing required in simultaneously (a) implementing new programs that facilitate the goal of achieving the 60/40 target of professional studies and arts and sciences enrollments, (b) enhancing state budget support through the Performance Based Budget Allocation formula, and (c) embarking on an era of steady-state overall enrollments.

As reflected in the Planning and Assessment recommendations in the self-study, students have not been widely or systematically included in the long range planning and assessment efforts, and greater efforts should be expended to include their voices in the development of long range plans and assessment strategies.

In its MOU with System Administration, the College commits itself to conduct annual surveys of graduates and to explore how to collect data systematically on employer satisfaction with its graduates. That information should enhance the assessment efforts conducted by the academic programs, and better prepare the institution to undertake more effective program reviews. In addition, the institution has appropriately recognized that, having reached the near completion of the Middle States reaccreditation effort and having initiated the next round of strategic planning, it is now advantageous (a) to reconcile in its next iteration of the strategic plan the reported inconsistencies that exist between the MOU with SUNY Administration and the current long range plan, and (b) to initiate discussion of the current Mission statement (that has remained unchanged since April, 1998) to insure that new program initiatives are compatible with the institution's goals. Finally, the Visiting Team has observed some concern among the faculty and staff that planning and assessment activities be provided more visible and permanent funding on an ongoing basis either at the institutional or unit level through the budgeting process.

SUGGESTION: Assessment programs that result in visible improvements to curricula demonstrate success to lagging departments. Assessment findings should be systematically incorporated into program review processes and support should be provided for recommended improvements.

SUGGESTION: The Visiting Team endorses the suggestion in the Self-Study report that SUNY Cortland enhance the perceived importance of assessment endeavors by providing more visible and sustained budgetary support to the assessment program.

Equity, Access, and Diversity

According to the *Characteristics of Excellence*, “An institution of higher education seeks to provide the most conducive environment for achieving its mission and goals and for the pursuit of learning. One of the attributes which permits an educational institution to provide such an environment is integrity: integrity in the manner in which an institution specifies its goals ... demonstrates sensitivity to equity and diversity issues ...”

“Since diverse student constituencies have differing needs, some students may require special support. Student services should be broad enough to meet the special needs of students, including part-time and older students, international and non-traditional students, and students with disabilities. Given this diversity, faculty and staff must be responsive to the spectrum of ability, preparation, and special needs of the student population.”

SUNY College at Cortland has begun to make strides in addressing the issues of equity, access and diversity in its community by implementing several initiatives. These efforts are consistent with SUNY Cortland’s institutional mission as reflected in its Mission Statement, that states that the College is “dedicated to the affirmation and promotion of diversity in the broadest sense.” These objectives have been included as priorities in the last three iterations of the College’s long range planning process and for the current planning round one of eight priority goals is to “increase the ethnic minority student and faculty populations and provide opportunities leading to an improved understanding of diversity.”

Efforts appear to have been made to establish responsive programs and services, but feedback from all constituencies suggests that more needs to be done. Involved faculty believe that the onus rests unfairly upon them. Students, while appreciative of opportunities available, feel somewhat isolated.

For fall 2000, the College was composed of 5.5% ethnic minority students and 58.1% women. For fall 2001, about 12% of full-time faculty and 7% of staff are ethnic minorities. New faculty hires for fall 2001 included four (out of 21) ethnic minorities.

The College’s efforts to recruit an ethnically diverse faculty and staff, given its location, will help to create the critical mass necessary to support a nurturing environment for all. The Team commends the President for establishing the Multicultural Resource Team and for establishing goals in admission and hiring, and commends the Provost for the ongoing attention to diversity within her cabinet and for enabling the efforts of the Multicultural and Gender Studies unit. Programs such as Cortland’s Urban Recruitment of Educators (CURE) and the SUNY Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) offer additional support for minority students.

SUGGESTION: The Visiting Team suggests that the successful strategies of the CURE and EOP programs be utilized as models for program development and implementation of other diversity initiatives.

RECOMMENDATION: The College has made admirable progress in the recruitment of ethnic minority students, faculty and staff. In order to continue to attract and effectively retain and support these new members of the Cortland Community, the College must create a climate that is hospitable and nurturing. The Team recommends a more tangible and visible investment in multicultural programs and services in order to create and sustain such a climate.

Intellectual Climate

One should first note that the candor that characterizes so much of the entire Self-Study is nowhere more evident than in this chapter. The mixed responses to questions about intellectual climate in the survey of academic chairs include both negative, positive, and balanced assessments of student readiness for college work and their attitudes toward the value of learning. Some chairs are quite negative. Others, more positive and perhaps less frustrated, note the unique demographics of Cortland students and the rural geographic and cultural influences of the region. They cite those factors when suggesting that many arriving students need to learn how to learn and would benefit from guidance and role modeling to help them appreciate intellectual endeavors.

Another source of information about student aptitudes and attitudes is the Student Opinion Survey that the working group consulted as well. The student answers to questions posed therein about student satisfaction with the atmosphere for learning, and their opportunities to be inspired to learn, suggest that both students and faculty could do better in pursuing common goals in this area.

The initiatives already taken in the recent past also deserve commendation; these “mechanisms in place,” such as COR 101, “The First Year Experience” orientation course, the Honors Program(s), the activities of Cortland’s chapter of Phi Kappa Phi, and the annual Scholars’ Day and Honors Convocation all help contribute toward the improvement of student attitudes toward learning. Changing a culture is never quick or easy, but the formal and informal interaction between faculty and students, advocated generally in the report, also seems a potentially promising avenue for imparting a love of learning among college students ready for college life.

Aside from and beyond those worthy recommendations concluding the chapter on intellectual climate, the most significant indicator of the future direction of this effort appears to have sprung from the end of the formal self study process itself. That end has turned out to be a new beginning. The members of the working group on Intellectual Climate simply weren’t ready to relent in their efforts. Instead, they took the initiative to seek the support of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs in forming a special task force recruited from a cross section of

campus representatives from diverse constituencies. This mix of energetic new faculty and seasoned veterans, formally convened as a committee only since February 2002, has already begun to conduct weekly meetings with individuals, with groups at open meetings, and with student representatives of their various organizations.

The committee reports that they have drafted include a working definition of “intellectual climate,” and they are now engaged in acting on suggestions received that could enhance that climate. Some of those include: the students’ number one priority—more “use of space to bring students and faculty together” (areas on campus, such as the student union, spaces in other buildings) where learning through socialization could go on beyond classroom rapport); integration of faculty and student projects (both curricular and extracurricular); closer coordination of freshman orientation and the ensuing first-year experience. This exciting initiative that has been instigated by dedicated faculty and sponsored by a supportive administration shows much promise. While commending their effort and supporting their plans, the Visiting Team cautions that “climate” is a long range accumulation of “weather,” and the latter must change sufficiently to bring about an incremental change in the former. The involvement of more and more people will be needed to effect change over a long term. In the face of the difficulty of this challenge and its importance to the College, the Visiting Team applauds the willingness of Cortland’s faculty to go “beyond the call of duty” to meet the needs of their students.

Technology

SUNY Cortland’s Information Resources (IR) unit was formed in 1993 by combining the Campus Computer Center, Memorial Library, Telecommunications Department, and the Sperry Learning Resources Center. The 1997 Periodic Review Report to Middle States noted that changes in technology in the preceding five years were “stunning” and, from this visit and evidence presented in the Self-Study, this area continues to advance. IR is responsible for planning, developing, coordinating, and managing the information and technological resources and services of the campus.

Information Resources currently consists of 65.85 FTE staff members, representing a 20% increase since 1995-96. The IR unit is to be commended for the collaborative relationships that exist among its component departments.

It is evident that since the mid-1990’s, goals and objectives related to technology have changed substantially--from developing a campus information and technology infrastructure to providing services and resources that utilize that infrastructure. SUNY College at Cortland noted that the single most significant change since 1997 is the completion of the fiber-optic data communication network. The College’s technology-related goals and objectives are closely aligned with its Mission Statement. The Self-Study notes however, that “SUNY Cortland does not have a campus-wide definition of student competence in the use of technology nor does it have a formal assessment plan for this area.”

Other important advances include: 1) establishment of the Technology Help Center in academic computing; 2) completion of full network capability in the campus' Old Main Building-- including seven new computer labs and seven technology classrooms all housing state-of-the-art equipment; 3) a significant improvement in access to technology; 4) a tremendous increase in the number of computer lab desktop machines; 5) provision of network access through HallNet to all students living in residence halls; and, 6) approval by the President's Cabinet of a rolling replacement plan for desktop technology. These activities have also been part of the College's long range planning process since 1996 and directly support the present priority goal to "infuse technology across the College, for both instructional and non-instructional purposes." The All-College Student Learning Goal states the intention to produce students who "possess the skills to gather relevant information, evaluate it critically, and communicate it effectively ... in written and oral forms."

The Team noted that technology and a variety of teaching strategies, including the use of computers, are being systematically integrated into the educational program and curricula of the College. As evidence, it was noted that academic computing supports a large network of servers, more than 2,200 computers and 6,500 peripherals for all administrative and academic offices, computer labs and special computing sites, and residence halls with a staff of only 12.5 positions. Each faculty member employed since 1996 has been issued a new computer; senior faculty have either received a new or upgraded computer. Older computers are re-configured for Internet use, part-time faculty use, and other applications. Presently, there are 29 laptops available for loan to faculty.

Of approximately 120 classrooms, currently 34 of these are SMART (i.e., technologically enabled) classrooms. Thirteen additional computer labs with computer projection capability are also available. SMART classroom technology training for faculty is provided on an individual and department basis. Classroom Media Services provides training in the use of LCD projectors in the computer labs.

In terms of administrative computing, with the implementation of the new student information system, BANNER 2000, admissions, financial aid, advisement, student accounts, residential services, and the Registrar's Office have been able to integrate their databases to serve students more effectively.

Information literacy programs are increasingly available to students, most of which have been provided through the SUNY Cortland Memorial Library Instructional Services Program. More than 3,000 students receive instruction annually in information literacy. Overall, there has been a 54% increase in information and computer literacy workshops over the past 5 years, and a 48% increase in attendance at these workshops. The Library also provides the Composition Library Information Program (CLIP), a requirement of English composition (CPN 101). Among other workshops offered by the Library are the faculty and staff training programs which are held on a regular basis through the Faculty Training Center. More than 1,000 faculty and staff attended

over 200 workshops during 2000-01.

Programs and services provided by Memorial Library have shifted significantly during the last few years to reflect the growing influence of technology. In recent years, the Library budget for the acquisition of print resources has been cut significantly while the budget for electronic resources has increased. The Library has developed a strong program of providing student technology workshops, subject-related instruction, and faculty/staff training workshops. Also, many of the advanced courses offered through the Computer Application Program (CAP) are offered by the Library.

Overall, the Information Resources Unit is to be commended for the collaborative relationships that exist among its departments. The Team does endorse the College's recommendation that continuous assessment of the technology, computer and library needs of the campus take place in order to maximize services by integrating the results into all planning and implementation efforts by the College.

SUGGESTION: The Visiting Team endorses the College's recommendation to "develop a comprehensive definition of student competence in information and computer literacy and implement an assessment process college-wide to assess the competence."

SUGGESTION: With the increase of expenditures for electronic resources in recent years, the budget for the acquisition of print collections in the Library has been cut severely. Attention should be given to the balance between electronic and print resources in the Library.

Internal Institutional Context

Internal institutional stakeholders include the students, faculty, professional and support staffs, including the Auxiliary Services Corporation (ASC), and administrators. Administrative and governance policies and procedures are outlined in various policy and regulatory documents as well as various collective bargaining agreements.

The organizational structures, quality of communication, and the clarity of roles and responsibilities in institutional decision-making are important to the institution especially in facilitating shared governance. What is particularly vital is the willingness of the institution to collectively engage in ongoing assessment of the effectiveness of the organizational models, its informal and formal communication networks, and the extent to which stakeholders are included in the decision-making process. The president is to be recognized for fostering a climate of open communication and shared governance involving all stakeholders. The honest and open manner in which the institutional Self-Study reflects strengths, weaknesses and recommendations for improvement illustrates the open communication that exists within the College community. Equally important is a clear understanding by all stakeholders of the mission of the institution. The institution is to be commended for integrating the long range planning process with assessment and making important strides in incorporating budgetary considerations in the planning process.

The organizational structure reflected in the SUNY Cortland Organizational Chart accurately depicts the relationships among the four major units or divisions of the institution. The president is respected and experienced. Working with his administrative team, he has been able to move the institution forward even during a period in which the institution has been confronted with serious financial constraints and many new and complex external mandates.

Enrollments have increased steadily over the past five years with 64% of the students enrolled in the School of Professional Studies (PS), 32% in the School of Arts and Sciences (AS), and 4% of the students classified as pre-majors.

During the same period, the institution has experienced more than a 50% turnover in full-time tenure track faculty due, in part, to early retirement incentives. In an effort to achieve its *MOU* goal with *SUNY System Administration* of having 80% of the courses taught by full-time faculty, part-time and adjunct faculty positions are being converted into full-time lectureships while new tenure track faculty are being hired to replace retired faculty.

While the majority of the students are enrolled in PS programs, the majority of credit hour production is in AS programs. The institution has committed in its *MOU* to significantly reduce the differential between majors in the two schools so that 60% of the students are enrolled in PS programs in comparison to 40% in AS programs. A Title III, five-year, \$1.75 million grant is targeted to help increase enrollments in AS programs and improve advisement.

The Faculty Senate plays a vital campus leadership role in Academic Affairs and campus life. It is the primary faculty and staff governance structure on campus. There is a very positive working relationship and open lines of communication between the senior academic and administrative officers and the Faculty Senate, especially with the Faculty Senate Steering Committee. A fine example of this close cooperation is illustrated by the Faculty Senate's shared responsibility in working with the president to periodically modify criteria for Discretionary Salary Increases (DSI). Unfortunately, in recent years there has been a lack of participation or involvement in Faculty Senate business by the rank and file faculty.

There is a good working relationship between the administration and the various unions, i.e., Civil Service Employees Association, Council 82, New York State Corrections Officers Police Benevolent Association, Public Employees Federation, and the United University Professions (UUP). UUP leaders have high praise for the president in setting a climate of open communication between the union and the administration. UUP concerns have focused on the role and responsibilities of part-time faculty and the issues related to faculty teaching loads.

With increased enrollments come new challenges. Increased enrollments mean offering more courses and that means greater demands on both full-time and adjunct faculty. Teaching loads vary from school to school and from department to department within schools. Advising loads also vary from school to school with an especially heavy burden on PS faculty in Physical

Education and Education.

There has been a concerted effort to integrate assessment and long range planning with the budget process. While supporting the assessment process, many upper and mid-level administrators express frustration over the highly centralized procedures for securing funding for even seemingly routine administrative and academic functions and expenditures.

Numerous surveys and questionnaires designed to measure administrator, faculty, and staff morale have been administered as part of the Middle States institutional self-study process. The results of the surveys generally reveal a strong commitment to the institution and its mission but frustration over the tremendous time commitments required in order to properly address all of the recent tasks associated with unit or program accreditation, institutional reaccreditation, institutional five-year program reviews, comprehensive assessment initiatives, SUNY's *A New Vision in Teacher Education* mandates, ongoing development and implementation of new undergraduate and graduate degree programs, meeting new New York State Education Department (NYSED) teacher certification standards, all the while trying to conduct numerous faculty searches. The pressures and demands of all of these important tasks are especially evident in PS departments and programs because of the additional or special challenges of dealing with new accreditation standards of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the NYSED re-registry requirements.

With almost 50% of the full-time faculty recent hires, the situation is exacerbated because new junior faculty members most commonly are trying to adjust to campus life and focus on their teaching while trying to develop a research agenda. Therefore, service is not always seen as a high priority by new or junior faculty. The president has been able to use DSI as incentives to reward service activities such as faculty service on College-wide committees.

SUGGESTION: The extensive efforts in planning, assessment, and compliance with NYSED reregistry, general education mandates and NCATE accreditation processes, and years of resource constraint, have placed tremendous pressure on faculty, staff and administration. Attention should be given to the quality of life within the workplace for all members of the SUNY College at Cortland community.

External Institutional Context

In its Self-Study, SUNY Cortland identifies its external stakeholders as including: New York State, the SUNY Board of Trustees, the SUNY System Administration, the New York State Education Department, state government, external accrediting bodies, the College Council, and the local community. The Visiting Team suggests that SUNY Cortland incorporate the input of employers of its graduates and its alumni in considering external stakeholders.

SUNY Cortland appears to be dealing effectively with its stakeholders as evidenced by its MOU with SUNY System Administration, its commitment to implement the SUNY Provost's Advisory Task Force recommendations on assessing general education, its commitment to achieve NCATE

accreditation, strategies developed to contend with lagging state budget allocations, efforts to review and reclassify course offerings to improve funding under PBBA, successful programs and services in the regional community, and its commitment to become more successful in the arena of academic entrepreneurship.

SUNY Cortland plays an important role in the economic development and cultural enhancement of its regional community and has demonstrated enviable success in numerous community projects and endeavors, ranging from the Business Showcase co-sponsored with the Chamber of Commerce to the Women's Leadership Conference to Cortland student volunteer projects. A great deal of credit for the success of these projects should be accorded to the Director of Student Development and the Assistant Director of Career Services.

In addition, SUNY Cortland has adopted a proactive approach in dealing with the serious budgeting issues triggered by the newly implemented PBBA process, and appears to have derived appropriate strategies to enhance its budgeted allocation. In this regard, the demonstrated success of the Institutional Advancement Office to significantly increase the annual giving campaign and the Auxiliary Services Corporation to develop alternative sources of funding for the institution bode well for SUNY Cortland's struggles with lagging state appropriations for higher education. Likewise, the Visiting Team was favorably impressed with the strong and supportive relationship that exists among the College, the Alumni Board and the Foundation Board.

SUNY Cortland's commitment in its MOU with System Administration to conduct annual surveys of graduates and to explore how to collect data systematically on employer satisfaction with SUNY Cortland graduates should provide valuable information helpful to the fund raising efforts of the Office of College Advancement.

Infrastructure

Cortland has an extensive campus of 40 buildings encompassing 2 million square feet on 191 acres. There are three areas of the campus differentiated by topography. Most of the academic and administrative buildings and several residence halls are in the "upper" area. The remaining residence and dining halls and the student union are on the center campus, while the physical education facilities are generally in the "lower" area.

Campus facilities planning will continue to require careful attention in order to support the academic programs and enrollment goals of Cortland. The new leadership in the facilities management area has adopted and demonstrated to the Cortland community a customer service orientation and has successfully completed many important projects in recent years. The College received \$41 million from the State University Construction Fund (SUCF) for a five-year period scheduled for completion by 2003. The College reports it has expended or committed most of the funds already available and is now preparing its next five-year program.

There appear to be many areas of the campus not accessible by the physically challenged. This area of facilities planning is one of a number of priorities including life-safety, energy management and renovations that need to be addressed by the facilities plan now in development. However, the number and cost of life safety projects may exceed the expected funding. Accordingly, it does not appear that ADA compliance projects will have sufficient priority to substantially improve the accessibility of the campus, although some progress may be made as part of “roll-up” projects.

RECOMMENDATION: The deferred maintenance throughout the campus is a growing liability; that the newest buildings were constructed over 30 years ago exacerbates this problem. Of particular note, many areas of the campus are not accessible to students with physical disabilities. The Team recommends that in light of the number of students with physical disabilities, the College review its plans for facilities projects and ensure that the needs of accessibility are given priority.

CONCLUSION

SUNY College at Cortland had excellent campus involvement in the self-study effort. The College has developed a strong culture of planning and assessment over the past six years. All constituent groups take the process seriously and clearly had a role in the preparation for the Team visit. The Self-Study was notably candid and it was evident that the College had already begun to work toward addressing many of the recommendations included therein.

The senior administration is well qualified and appear to work well together. The President is well respected and is seen as valuing shared governance and community building. The faculty and staff appear to be highly qualified, dedicated and caring.

The quality of the student body is strong and improving. Ongoing efforts to diversify the student body should be followed up with efforts to create a climate that is hospitable and nurturing.

Despite the fiscal pressure arising from operating within SUNY allocations and budgeting systems, SUNY College at Cortland has prudently managed its resources. The physical plant is well managed and new construction in the form of an extensive and impressive athletic complex promises to enhance the environment for the College and its local community.

The Visiting Team left Cortland convinced of the promise of the institution and the ability of the administration, faculty, and staff to fulfill its potential. We trust that the recommendations and suggestions in this report will be helpful.