

Report to Faculty, Administrators, Trustees, and Students  
of

Atlantic Cape Community College  
Mays Landing, New Jersey 08330-2699

Prepared following analysis of the institution's  
Periodic Review Report

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## **Evaluation of the Periodic Review Report Atlantic Cape Community College**

### **I. Introduction**

Atlantic Cape Community College is a comprehensive two-year public institution located in New Jersey, Atlantic and Cape May counties. The college was established in 1964 and received its initial Middle States accreditation in 1971. Its mission is to create opportunity by providing access to superior educational programs. The College offers a total of fifty-three academic programs and three academic certificates. The full-time equivalent academic credit enrollment at the College for FY2012 was 5,844 FTE's with a total of 165,657 credits. Also in FY2012, the non-credit enrollment, open enrollment and customized training amounted to 202,400 clock hours.

The Periodic Review Report (PRR) provided the readers with a comprehensive overview of institutional progress since the College's decennial self-study and team visit in 2006. The PRR is direct, clearly written, and is replete with supporting documentation. Additionally, the PRR reported 62 recommendations. Of these 21 were recommended by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) visiting team and 41 were recommended by the College. These recommendations encompassed each of the 14 MSCHE standards. The readers have reviewed the PRR and offer the following report, which include recommendations for improvement.

### **II. Responses to Recommendations from the Previous Decennial Evaluation**

This section summarizes the College's responses to 62 recommendations-41 recommendations from the self-study and 21 MSCHE recommendations offered by the visiting team in 2006.

#### Mission and Goals

The visiting team offered two recommendations regarding Mission and Goals (Standard 1). The first recommendation entailed combining the two mission statements used by the college into one statement. As described in the PRR, in 2009, the College reviewed and revised the mission statement during the development of its 2012- 2016 Strategic Plan.

The visiting team's second recommendation involved writing clearly stated language that is outcomes based and capable of being evaluated. As the PRR indicates, the College has developed and implemented an Institutional Effectiveness Plan that integrates the new mission and provides measureable objectives.

#### Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal

The institutional self-study generated six recommendations regarding Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal (Standard 2): linking strategic planning, governance and decision-making to institutional effectiveness and

assessment of student learning; integrating the academic, technology, and facilities plans with the strategic plan to best support the institutional mission; integrating and centralizing strategic planning, institutional research, and institutional assessment; and developing a contingency plan to address emergency circumstances. The PRR indicates that the College has addressed most of these recommendations with the development of the Institutional Effectiveness Plan (IEP), the restructuring of the Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment, the establishment of the cross-functional planning committees and the development of an emergency management plan for the main campus and each of the three campuses. However, there was no evidence that the academic, technology, and facilities plans were integrated with the institutional strategic plan.

*The readers **recommend** that the college address its recommendation to integrate the academic, technology, and facilities plans with the strategic plan to best support the institutional mission.*

#### Institutional Resources

The self-study generated two recommendations regarding Institutional Resources (Standard 3): extend the resource allocation assessment process and methodology to include the means for assessing the comparative benefits and costs of areas such as facilities, academics, technology, and student services. In response, the College has included the need to assess the resource allocation process in the Strategic Plan. Further, to operationalize this process, the College worked with RPK associates to prepare a framework for comparing costs and benefits through the use of a strategic finance model. This model shows where resources have been saved or enhanced and where they have gone to support the 2012-2016 Strategic Plan. Additionally, the College now prioritizes areas of funding to promote progress of the Strategic Plan through the Strategic Initiative Fund which provides seed money for new operational initiatives and the R&R fund which targets student facility dollars to the highest institutional needs.

The second recommendation generated by the self-study entailed the development of a college wide technology plan that allows equitable distribution and allocation of technological resources. As noted in the PRR, the Information Technology Cross Functional Committee has developed and began implementation of the comprehensive 2012-2016 Technology Plan.

#### Leadership and Governance

The visiting team offered two recommendations for Leadership and Governance (Standard 4): the board needs to take a more active role in advocating on behalf of the College to the community as well as actively fundraise; and the board needs to regularly review and update broad college policies. The PRR does not indicate clear evidence that the Board of Trustees is “more actively advocating on behalf of the College as well as actively fund-raising”.

*The readers **recommend** that the College provide clear evidence that the Board of Trustees is taking a more active role in advocating on behalf of the College to the community as well as fundraising.*

As far as the second visiting team recommendation mentioned above, there is clear evidence that all college policies have been reviewed and revised, if necessary, over the past six years.

In addition to the two visiting team recommendations, four recommendations emerged from the self-study regarding Leadership and Governance (Standard 4): develop and implement an annual formal board retreat to review the roles and responsibilities of college trustees and to establish a comprehensive board self-evaluation document and process; design and implement formal and detailed performance evaluation processes for the president, board, and college administration; evaluate annually senior staff personnel, as well as the performance of each senior level organizational unit, with more formalized and measurable evaluation instruments, with specific goals and objectives targeted; and develop and disseminate college-wide organizational charts. The PRR indicates that the College has addressed these recommendations. The Board of Trustees holds an annual retreat on the first Friday each February. Using the ACCT best practices, the Board of Trustees Self-Assessment Survey has been developed and implemented. The Board of Trustees has also developed a Presidential Evaluation Committee to review the President's performance annually, and the President has developed and implemented a best-practice model to administer annual performance evaluations of the senior staff. And finally, the college-wide organizational charts have been developed and are currently available and disseminated via the College website.

#### Administration

The self-study included two recommendations regarding Administration (Standard 5). The first recommendation was to use intentional strategies of consensus building, collegiality, and collaboration to make decisions. As the PRR notes several times, the College has created five cross-functional committees that work collaboratively to address the College's needs and make recommendations as it relates to, for example, resource allocation for the fulfillment of strategic goals.

The second recommendation was to evaluate staffing and services at all college sites on an ongoing basis so that personnel and resource decisions can be made in a timely manner. The PRR describes a process, but there is no clear evidence that an evaluation of staffing and services has been conducted at all college sites. Further, there are no results of the evaluation and use of results.

*The readers **recommend** that the College follow through on its recommendation to evaluate staffing and services at all college sites on an ongoing basis so that personnel and decisions can be made in a timely manner.*

## Integrity

This section of the PRR includes the College addressing five recommendations from the self-study and one recommendation from the visiting team for Integrity (Standard 6). The following are several recommendations that emerged from the self-study process, review and revise the ethics policy to align with current standards or adopt new ethics policies as appropriate; revise the college website to include a checklist of compliance forms for requesting permissions of copyright owners to foster compliance in regard to intellectual property rights. In response to the recommendations, the College, now, has developed and or revised the following policies, conflict of interest and copyright and intellectual property rights. Both are posted on its website in its policy manual.

However, the College did not address several recommendations generated by the self-study process. As it relates to incorporating the necessary accommodations for disabled people in the college-wide physical renovations in the planning stage, the PRR listed the renovations and future renovations, but did not describe the specific accommodations incorporated.

*The readers **recommend** that the College discuss the specific accommodations incorporated or will be incorporated regarding the renovation projects listed in the PRR.*

The visiting team agreed with the following recommendations made by the College; evaluate the need for additional staffing to address the increasing special needs population; monitor the increase in special needs students and evaluate staff accordingly. The PRR indicates that the College, considering budget constraints, has put in place a temporary solution to address the growing number of students with disabilities. This solution involves no additional staffing, but travel of a full-time counselor to the various college sites. The readers have serious concern regarding this issue of limited staffing and the significant increase in special populations (367 in 2005-2006 to 484 in 2009-2010) and the negative impact that it can have on student success.

*The readers **suggest** that, as funds become available, the College revisit this issue and allocate resources for additional staffing to support the increasing special needs population.*

## Institutional Assessment

The self-study included one recommendation regarding Institutional Assessment (Standard 7): develop an institutional effectiveness plan that will include an efficient and reliable process of assessment, which will form the basis for continual improvement, strategic planning, resource allocation, and organizational quality. In 2006 after its decennial review, the Commission placed the institution on warning regarding Institutional Assessment. The directive from the Commission was to develop a comprehensive institutional strategic plan that links to long-range planning and decision-making and budgeting processes and to develop an organized and

sustained process for assessment of institutional effectiveness and demonstrate evidence of progress. The College describes the development of its 2012- 2016 Strategic Plan as a significant development. The plan is a comprehensive strategic plan linked to long-range planning, decision-making and the budgeting process. Further, after several revisions, the Institutional Effectiveness Plan for the college is an organized, sustained process that supports the strategic plan and has clear measureable objectives. The PRR notes along with clear evidence that the college has made significant process regarding the implementation of the IEP.

#### Student Admissions and Retention

There were two recommendations generated by the self-study and four recommendations offered by the visiting team regarding Student Admissions and Retention (Standard 8). The PRR indicates that the College has addressed the majority of recommendations included in this section. They were as following, provide admissions services consistently, reliably, and equitably at all campuses; publish its Student Right to Know information; students should be aware of where they can obtain information regarding graduation, placement and transfer; information on student learning outcomes should be available to prospective students; a common definition of learning outcomes should be developed and a consistent way to make them available to prospective students determined; use data compiled by the research department to evaluate the match between students and the College mission to enable Atlantic Cape to develop appropriate programs; 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.

In response to the aforementioned recommendations, the College made changes to procedures to reflect the new student information system, *Datatel Colleague*. The admissions website is updated annually along with the application form to ensure the collection of critical data used to inform, for example, program offerings. Staff meetings are held regularly to ensure the staff has the most current information regarding college policies, procedures, and admissions office requirements. The PRR also notes that these meeting are used to garner feedback from staff regarding admissions and student engagement. Further, the admissions office has relocated to a more “academically friendly” area shared by advising, financial aid, and testing. The office has become a one-stop center for all student support needs. The PRR also indicates that the same level of student services is available at the various campus locations.

The PRR notes that the college has made additional efforts in communicating its Right to Know policies and background information on the Clery Act. Thus, in addition to an annual email to students, the College has established a website to disseminate the information to students. Additionally, the Office of Institutional Research, Planning and Assessment, currently, publishes reports on enrollment, graduation, retention, and transfer rates in an annual Fact Book. The College is also required by the State of New Jersey to publish similar information. This information can be retrieved on the College’s website.

The College has not completely addressed the visiting team's recommendation regarding "information on student learning outcomes should be made available to prospective students". The PRR indicates that the College publishes the institutional-level goals in the annual catalog; however, the PRR does not indicate whether the institutional level student learning outcomes are published. Further, the College shares that it is currently in the process of completing the student learning assessment plans for each academic program, indicating that information on student learning outcomes is not currently available.

*The readers **recommend** that once the assessment information is available regarding student learning outcomes, that this information is made available to prospective students.*

The PRR does indicate that the College has addressed the portion of the recommendation that entails the College developing a common definition of learning outcomes.

The visiting team agreed with the College's recommendations regarding the collection and evaluation of data and its use to inform or develop appropriate programs. As stated in the PRR, data has become an integral part of the planning process in student services. The College shared that both qualitative and quantitative data are collected and used to inform decision-making. The College also lists several significant development improvement projects/initiatives that have been implemented based on data and assessment results.

#### Student Support Services

The College addresses six recommendations in this section of the PRR. There were four recommendations from the visiting team and two recommendations that came from the self-study for Student Support Services (Standard 9).

The four recommendations from the visiting team are: the college should address 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; the college should evaluate the Title IX requirements as they relate to current athletic programs; evaluation of the qualifications of key personnel who work in Student Services suggests the College should encourage professional development and/or additional credentialing in some key positions; student advising needs to be addressed college-wide and the process clarified.

In response to the recommendations mentioned above, the College has revised the non-academic and academic student policies and procedures and they are currently, posted on the Colleges website along with committee composition. Additionally, the College has hired a full-time Assistant Director of Athletics whose job responsibility involves monitoring Title IX compliance as it relates to athletics. To date, the College

has renovated and expanded its athletic facilities to provide equal opportunity for female and male athletes. Several sports have been added which include women's volleyball, women's basketball, women's softball, men's soccer, men's baseball, and golf. The PRR notes that the Title IX compliance officer regularly monitors the athletic program to ensure that equal treatment extends to equipment, practice and game scheduling, meal money, access to academic advising services, coaching, locker rooms, practice and game facilities, and other support services.

The PRR indicates that the student services leadership and counseling capacity has been greatly enhanced by the creation of several management positions and the addition of qualified personnel and counselors. The minimum requirement for the positions is a bachelor degree and several staff hold masters degrees. The PRR also indicates that professional development in key positions in Student Services has been continuous and systematic since the College's self-study in 2006. However, the examples of professional development engaged in by staff shared in the PRR are deficient.

*The readers **recommend** that the College continue to encourage professional development and provide clear evidence that the student services staff is, in fact, engaged in meaningful professional development.*

As it relates to the recommendation from the visiting team regarding student advising, it is clear from the PRR that the College is in the beginning stages of addressing this recommendation.

*The readers **recommend** that the College develop and implement a clear process regarding student advising.*

The two recommendations that emerged from the self-study process are, create and maintain a student complaint database for record keeping purposes that should be housed in the Dean of Students' area; ensure that student needs are met through adequate support services in each site.

The College has addressed one of the two aforementioned recommendations. The PRR clearly describes how the online system developed by the college is used for reporting and tracking student complaints, negative behavior and actions. Further, procedures have been developed to ensure that proper documentation is collected for each grievance. Students complete a complaint log form, and this information is entered into a database for tracking. Complaints are addressed by the Dean of Students' office.

The PRR does not indicate that the College has addressed the recommendation regarding ensuring that student needs are met through adequate support services in each site. The College shares a table in the PRR regarding the distribution of student services staff members at each campus. However, there is not enough information

shared in the PRR to support whether the student support services for each location is adequate.

*The readers **recommend** that the College provide evidence that the current support services at the various campus locations are, indeed, adequate.*

### Faculty

The following recommendations merged from the self-study process for Faculty (Standard 10), initiate the recruitment process earlier in the academic year to attract a diverse pool of applicants; increase the ratio of full-time to part-time faculty; maintain standards for adjunct faculty in terms of degree requirements and for academic preparation in assigned content areas consistent with those of full-time faculty; revise the observation process and cycle for full-time faculty; develop a faculty handbook that will include all policies and procedures affecting faculty performance evaluation; expand peer mentoring to the adjunct faculty.

As it relates to the recommendation regarding earlier initiation of the recruitment process to attract a diverse pool of candidates, the PRR did not address a specific process for recruitment of individuals from diverse backgrounds.

*The readers **recommend** that the College establish a specific process for the recruitment and retention of individuals from diverse backgrounds.*

As indicated in the PRR, the College the college has endorsed a policy to keep the ratio of full-time to part-time faculty ratio 50%-50% and is currently restructuring academic management to increase the number of full-time faculty taught sections. Further, the college, as noted in the PRR, maintains a level of standards in degree requirements for part-time faculty.

The PRR section that addresses the recommendation regarding the revision of the observation process and cycle for full-time faculty does not clearly state that the process describe has been revised.

*The readers **recommend** that the College provide evidence that the observation process and cycle for full-time faculty has been, in fact, revised.*

The faculty handbook including policies and procedures has been developed and is distributed to both full-time and part-time faculty at the beginning of each academic year and is available on the College's website. Additionally, the PRR describes the expansion of peer mentoring for part-time faculty.

### Educational Offerings

There are seven recommendations for Educational Offerings (Standard 11). The visiting team offered two recommendations and the self-study process produced five recommendations.

The first recommendation from the visiting team was similar to the College's recommendation regarding outcomes assessment in all programs. The PRR clearly indicates that the College assessment process now includes course-level, program and institutional outcomes. The second recommendation from the visiting team included the following, embed library/information literacy instruction formally into the curriculum in fundamental English courses. This recommendation was also similar to the College's recommendation regarding information literacy. In response, the College has adopted the NJCCC college-wide learning objectives for information literacy. Further, the PRR notes that in addition to being taught in ENGL 070, ENGL 080, and ENGL 101, information literacy is taught in several other courses, Mathematics, Computer Information Systems, Business, and Sociology.

The self-study recommendations are as following, form advisory boards for curricula that support liberal arts programs such as English and Mathematics. The College shares in the PRR that liberal arts programs such as English and Mathematics are designed as transfer programs; and thus, the College decided on an alternative approach to advisory boards. This approach involves ensuring a seamless transfer of general education credits. Additionally, the College goes on to explain that this process requires meeting with the College and faculty at senior institutions to establish transfer agreements.

The next recommendation involves using external review boards, like career advisory boards, to evaluate student work as part of the assessment process. The PRR indicates clearly that the College uses its external boards to evaluate student work and ensure that graduates are adequately prepared for their chosen careers.

The final recommendation for the section entails, collecting and analyzing data to allow assessment of Atlantic Cape's current transfer procedures. The PRR notes the data collected by the IR department. However, assessment involves the use of data to develop strategies/initiatives and or to inform changes or development of new policies and procedures for the purpose of improvement.

*The readers **recommend** that the institution close the loop and provide evidence regarding how the data was used to inform improvement of the College's transfer procedures.*

### General Education

There are three recommendations in this section regarding General Education (Standard 12). One recommendation is from the visiting team, and the self-study process generated two recommendations.

The PRR provides clear evidence that the College has complied with the recommendation offered by the visiting team. Using its assessment of critical thinking as a model, the college's assessment process has evolved from the assessment of one General Education goal (critical thinking) to the assessment of all the New Jersey General Education goals.

The final two recommendations from the self-study process have been not addressed anywhere in the PRR. These recommendations are, review and strengthen goals and actual courses to correlate with the General Education requirements; and, collect and analyze data to measure the effectiveness of the General Education course sequence as outlined in the catalog.

*The readers **recommend** that the College follow-through on addressing the recommendations that emerged from the self-study under General Education.*

#### Related Educational Activities

The College addresses four recommendations in this section of the PRR. The visiting team offers one recommendation and the self-study process produced two recommendations regarding Related Educational Activities (Standard 13).

The visiting team recommended that Atlantic Cape 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. The college declares in the PRR that developmental course credit is no longer used for degree requirements and that developmental courses offered at Atlantic Cape are for the primary purpose of preparing students for college-level course work.

The self-study offered three recommendations. The first recommendation entails exploring and implementing best practices in developmental education. The readers commend the institution for the best practices in which it has been engaged as described in this section of the PRR. To name a few, the College has implemented an Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) for English and Math, a Student Success Seminar, and Retention Alert (pilot stage). The PRR notes that results from the practices mentioned above will be compiled later this year. However, as shared in the PRR they have already realized positive results regarding ALP English. The students in the ALP English had higher percent of success as it relates to passing grades than those in the traditional course.

The second recommendation involves expansion of the concept and scope of instructional technology beyond online courses to meet the demands of course offerings while simultaneously training faculty and maintaining the quality of distance education. The PRR clearly indicates that the college has addressed this recommendation. In 2007, the College had 224 web-enhanced courses and by 2011, the number of web-enhanced courses increased to 889. Further, the College has increased its workshops/trainings from 10 in FY2007 to 40 in FY2011.

The third recommendation includes identifying and offering collaborative instructional initiatives between Academic Affairs and Continuing Education. The College has addressed this recommendation. The PRR notes that the College has Continuing Education programs that it has organizationally linked to three academic

areas creating “career ladder” academic programming that allows application of selected CE programs to be applied to technical studies AS degrees. Further, the College has moved several workforce programs in culinary arts, technology certificate programs, and HPI allied health programs under related academic departments.

#### Assessment of Student Learning

The visiting team offered four recommendations and the self-study produced one recommendation regarding Assessment of Student Learning (Standard 14).

The first recommendation offered by the visiting team was that the College should ensure that expectations of students learning are clearly articulated at various levels: institution, degree/program, and course and for the relevant discipline. The PRR notes that the institution will include expectations regarding student learning on the program in the college catalog beginning FY2014. The PRR does not indicate where the expectations for student learning on the institutional and course level will be articulated.

*The readers **recommend** that expectations of students learning are clearly articulated at the institution and course levels for the relevant discipline.*

The second recommendation is a similar recommendation offered under General Education, which is to build the assessment of the elements of the General Education upon the model the College piloted for critical thinking. The College has clearly addressed this recommendation (refer to the General Education section above).

The final recommendations include the following, the college should ensure and be able to document that the assessment of student learning is used to improve teaching and learning; the college should accelerate its efforts to bring assessment of student learning to the point where it becomes an integral part of the College; use the data and analysis derived from the Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan to improve curricula development and instructional delivery. In response the recommendations above, the College has clearly provided evidence in the PRR that it uses student learning assessment results to improve teaching and learning. The College included several matrices of student assessment results, which also included how faculty used the assessment results. Further, the College shares in the PRR several recommendations and strategies that the Faculty Assessment Committee is exploring that will improve the General Education assessment process.

### **III. Major Challenges and/or Opportunities**

The College has identified several significant challenges and opportunities that will have an impact, either positively or negatively, on the College’s mission and the successful implementation of its goals.

### Student Success and Open Access

The College indicates concern regarding the challenge of accomplishing both of these aspects of its mission. Its concern is, as with many community colleges, how do institutions keep tuition affordable and ensure student access and success in light of the reduced state and local funding and an increased reliance on student tuition and fees? Further, the College states, “This is a unique challenge for community colleges and the innovations and best practices from members of the sector will be watched and evaluated for their adaptations at Atlantic Cape.” Aligned with the College’s aforementioned suggestion, the readers offer the following suggestion related to Standard 1 and 8:

*The readers **suggest** that the College use the network of colleges in the national initiative that it has recently joined, *Achieving Dream*. The College should specifically use as models and mentors those Colleges that have achieved Leader College status. These colleges have realized significant and sustained improvement regarding student success.*

### Enrollment and Funding

As in the previous section, the College is concerned primarily with the reduced state and local funding and the reliance on student tuition and fees to provide needed resources. The PRR notes, that in the most recent budget for the College, students are responsible for two-thirds of the operating expenses and this has increased substantially over the last decade. The College also indicates that it has come to rely on tuition to fund short-term fluctuations in variable operating expenses. However, the College goes on to indicate that the fluctuating and sometimes unpredictable enrollments presents a challenge and provides uncertainty for both students as well as administrators. The College points out that this issue of enrollment and funding presents a challenge and demands many short-term resource decisions, which may or may not be harmful to the mission of the College.

The readers offer the following recommendation related to Standards 1, 3, and 8:

*The readers **recommend** the creation of a comprehensive enrollment management plan for recruitment, retention, marketing, and advertising.*

### Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

The institution notes in the PRR that Atlantic Cape views institutional effectiveness and assessment of student learning outcomes as essential to the fulfillment of the mission of the College; however, the PRR goes on to further note that assessment at all levels presents a challenge and that the faculty and staff view assessment as a time resource that competes with other activities that are of higher priority. The institution also states that efforts to establish the assessment as a part of the culture have “consumed resources.” Clearly, there is not a culture of evidence that has been established. It is apparent from the PRR that there is very little “buy-in” from faculty and staff and an implicit concern over the use of resources to support assessment efforts by the institution. The goal of institutional effectiveness is providing evidence

that an institution is accomplishing its mission, ultimately resulting in student learning and success. The reviewers have veritable concern regarding the aforementioned information shared and whether the institution can continue to sustain its institutional effectiveness process.

The readers offer the following recommendation and suggestion related to Standards 1, 2, 3, 7 and 14:

*The readers **recommend** that the College provide education and conduct on-going trainings with the faculty, staff and administrators regarding the importance of the work of assessment and how critical assessment is to accomplishing the mission of the college.*

*The readers **suggest** that the College build into the IEP a periodic review of whether the plan continues to meet the intended needs of the College and whether there are adequate resources (i.e. human, fiscal, technological) to sustain the process.*

#### Full- and Part-time Faculty

This section of the PRR primarily states that a challenge for the college is balancing the benefits of full-time faculty contributions and professional development needs for part-time faculty. The college has made a commitment to deliver 50% of credits with full-time faculty members while providing the needed professional development and support to part-timers to deliver the other 50%. In addition to the peer and senior mentoring indicated in the PRR as a part of the professional development of part-timers, the readers offer the following recommendation related to Standard 10:

*The readers **recommend** that the College establish a comprehensive part-time faculty professional development plan that includes a plan for assessment of part-time faculty performance.*

#### Administrative Staff Retirements

While the institution noted in the PRR that turn-over of personnel can present challenges for an institution, the College presents the administrative retirements as an opportunity to take a look at the institutional organization, conduct an internal talent assessment and restructure and reallocate resources. The PRR notes that the college has lost to retirement several key administrative positions, Dean of a branch campus, the Dean of Students, the Executive Director of College relations, and the Director of Enrollment services. The PRR further notes that this trend is expected to continue over the next five years. In light of the information shared above, the readers have concern regarding the negative impact to the institution and accomplishing its mission if the positions mentioned above are not replaced with “high-performing” highly skilled individuals. Hence, the readers make the following recommendation related to standard 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.

*The readers **recommend** that the college develop and implement a succession plan to address the recent and future retirements at the institution.*

The PRR noted several new developments in which the readers wish to commend the College. The development of its new 2012-2016 strategic plan; the acceptance of the College into the Achieving the Dream network; the achievement of its \$36 million capital campaign; and the expansion of its facilities to include new STEM labs, Student Success Centers on each of the College's three campuses, and construction of the Worthington Atlantic City Campus hospitality wing.

#### **IV. Assessment Processes and Plans**

After its decennial visit in 2007, the Commission placed the institution on warning for Standard 7 and requested that the institution develop an organized and sustained process for assessment of institutional effectiveness and demonstrate progress as it relates to implementation. Since receiving the warning in 2007, the College has made significant progress in the implementation of the Institutional Effectiveness Plan (IEP). As the PRR indicates, the institution is beginning to build a culture of assessment.

The PRR further notes, as it relates to the institutional effectiveness, that annual divisional goals are set to reflect institutional objectives. Specific objectives related to each division are included in a responsibility and champion matrix. This matrix ensures the alignment of institutional goals and objectives to the assessment data collected, and the divisions committees responsible for championing the goals. Examples of implemented budget initiatives/projects tied to the institutional effectiveness processes include expansion of the college's intercollegiate sports program to include the women's basket ball team, the administration of the College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), the college's branding and positioning platform, Datatel Colleague Finance Module implementation as part of the MIS renewal, the adoption of the WEAVE online as the management tool for learning assessment, and the hiring of a consultant to support the College's strategic plan renewal.

Regarding student learning assessment, Atlantic Cape developed its first Academic Assessment plan in 2007 and is a major component of the 2012-2016 IEP. The plan is designed to foster learning and student success through learning outcomes assessment at the institutional, program, and course levels to ensure curricular quality through continuous quality improvement. The PRR notes that the assessment of student learning process is faculty driven and there is clear evidence that assessment is occurring at the levels mentioned above. There are several examples included in the PRR of how the assessment results have been used to inform curriculum, teaching strategies, program initiatives, and assessment techniques.

#### **V. Enrollment and Finance Trends and Projections**

Atlantic Cape experienced moderate enrollment growth throughout the 2005-2008 period of approximately two and five percent per year. However, after fluctuations in employment and increased unemployment rates following a recession, the College experienced unusual growth exceeding 10%. The Spring 2010 semester was the peak

of enrollment with an all time high of 7,657 students generating 79,835 credits. The Fall 2010 growth followed this growth closely with an enrollment of 7,655 students generating 78,703 credits. Fall 2011 was the first semester to indicate a decline in enrollment and fall 2012 followed this trend. Further, the PRR highlights the impact of recent high school graduates on overall enrollment of the College. The number of high school graduates in both Atlantic Cape and May counties who have enrolled at the College in the fall directly after graduation continues to decline. The College realized a 3.5% decrease in fall 2011 as compared to the previous year.

As it relates to enrollment projections, the College based the calculation of enrollment projections on two methods. The first is the cohort-survival method using the cohorts of student in the K-12 system to project the number of expected graduates from high schools in the service area. The second is the use of historical trends in times of economic fluctuations. The PRR indicates, that the College expects enrollment to decline over the next three years. This projection, as noted in the PRR, is driven primarily by a projected decline in high school enrollments.

The College receives revenue from three main sources: tuition and fees, state aid and county support. In FY2011, there was a .8% decrease in the College's total revenue from \$55.9 million in FY2010 to \$55.5 million. Of the total, tuition and fee revenue decreased by 4.2%, student credit hour enrollments decreased from the prior fiscal year. Revenue from federal, state, and local grants and contracts decreased due to program eligibility and program funding for the federal PELL program. Other state and local grants and contracts decreased, which also reflects a decline in state workforce development revenues that have shifted from local agencies to the state customized training programs. The Atlantic Cape and May counties appropriations to the College decreased .6% and the State of New Jersey appropriation decreased by 2.4%. In addition, there were no federal appropriations in 2011. Despite the decrease in state support and county aid, Atlantic Cape declares in the PRR that the College's financial position is currently sound. However, there was no budget projection included in this section of the PRR.

## **VI. Linked Institutional Planning and Budgeting Processes**

The PRR highlights the development and implementation of the 2012-2016 Strategic Plan as one of the College's most significant developments. The College utilized a collaborative approach to collect local input on the College's strategic direction. During the development process, the College met with critical economic development and educational partners to develop a strategic plan to meet the most current educational challenges in the community. The plan was completed and approved by the Board of Trustees February 2011. To track the implementation of the plan, the Institutional Outcomes Report is annually disseminated to the College. As noted in the PRR, this report provides evidence of how the College translates strategy and institutional assessment outcomes into tangible actions aimed at institutional renewal.

The information in the Institutional Outcomes Report is used by the college leadership to set priorities for the next fiscal year, and by the college community, divisions, departments and cross-functional committees to identify budget divisional goals and to propose strategic budget initiatives. The annual planning, budgeting and assessment model at Atlantic Cape, the “strategic management” model is a six-step process, which occurs and is sustained every fiscal year. The PRR outlines the six-step process and the various constituencies at the college do not seem to be well represented in the budgeting and decision-making process. The process presents a top-down approach.

*The readers **recommend** that the College revise its “strategic management” model to include the various constituencies at the college in the six-step process.*

## **VII. Conclusion**

Atlantic Cape Community College has made significant progress as it relates to planning, assessment, and allocation of resources. In the current climate of budgetary constraints and increased focus on outcomes, the College faces difficult decisions as it relates to allocation of resources. Concomitantly, the institution works with diminishing state and county aid and is held accountable for improved student learning outcomes, with an emphasis on degree completion for all student populations, specifically the underserved populations. In short, Atlantic Cape, as well as other community colleges, is expected to increase productivity, by improving student achievement using existing resources. Hence, it is imperative that Atlantic Cape makes sound data-driven decisions regarding its budget and the allocation of resources. To this end, Atlantic Cape has developed and adopted a comprehensive and organized institutional effectiveness plan, which includes a systematic process of planning, budgeting, implementation and assessment.

The College has realized significant improvements as a result of a strategic well-implemented planning process. However, institutional effectiveness is about continuous quality improvement and is on-going. Thus, it is in the spirit of continuous quality improvement that the readers offer and re-state the recommendations and suggestions that appear earlier in this report:

- 1. The readers **recommend** that the college address its recommendation to integrate the academic, technology, and facilities plans with the strategic plan to best support the institutional mission (Standard 2).*
- 2. The readers **recommend** that the College provide clear evidence that the Board of Trustees is taking a more active role in advocating on behalf of the College to the community as well as fundraising (Standard 4).*
- 3. The readers **recommend** that the College follow through on its recommendation to evaluate staffing and services at all college sites on an ongoing basis so that personnel and decisions can be made in a timely manner (Standard 5).*

4. The readers **recommend** that the College discuss the specific accommodations incorporated or will be incorporated regarding the renovation projects listed in the PRR (Standard 6).
5. The readers **suggest** that, as funds become available, the College revisit the issue of increasing additional staffing to support the increasing special needs population and allocate resources for additional staffing (Standard 6).
6. The readers **recommend** that once the assessment information is available regarding student learning outcomes, that this information is made available to prospective students (Standard 8).
7. The readers **recommend** that the College continue to encourage professional development and provide clear evidence that the student services staff is, in fact, engaged in meaningful professional development (Standard 9).
8. The readers **recommend** that the College develop and implement a clear process regarding student advising (Standard 9).
9. The readers **recommend** that the College provide evidence that the current support services at the various campus locations are, indeed, adequate (Standard 9).
10. The readers **recommend** that the College establish a specific process for the recruitment and retention of individuals from diverse backgrounds (Standard 10).
11. The readers **recommend** that the College provide evidence that the observation process and cycle for full-time faculty has been, in fact, revised (Standard 10).
12. The readers **recommend** that institution close the loop and provide evidence regarding how the data was used to inform improvement of the College's transfer procedures (Standard 11).
13. The readers **recommend** that the College follow-through on addressing the recommendations that emerged from the self-study regarding General Education (Standard 12).
14. The readers **recommend** that expectations of students learning are clearly articulated at the institution and course levels for the relevant discipline (Standard 14).
15. The readers **suggest** that the College use the network of colleges in the national initiative that it has recently joined, Achieving Dream. The College should specifically use as models and mentors those Colleges that have achieved Leader College status. These colleges have realized significant and sustained improvement regarding student success (Standard 1 and 8).

16. The readers **recommend** the creation of a comprehensive enrollment management plan for recruitment, retention, marketing, and advertising (Standards 1, 3 and 8).
17. The readers **recommend** that the College provide education and conduct on-going trainings with the faculty, staff and administrators regarding the importance of the work of assessment and how critical assessment is to accomplishing the mission of the college (Standards 1, 2, 3, 7 and 14).
18. The readers **suggest** that the College build into the IEP a periodic review of whether the plan continues to meet the intended needs of the College and whether there are adequate resources (i.e. human, fiscal, technological) to sustain the process (Standards 1, 2, 3, 7, and 14).
19. The readers **recommend** that the College establish a comprehensive part-time faculty professional development plan that includes a plan for assessment of part-time faculty performance (Standard 10).
20. The readers **recommend** that the college develop and implement a succession plan to address the recent and future retirements at the institution (Standards 1, 2, 3, 4, 5).