Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students
of
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
COLLEGE AT OLD WESTBURY

by

An Evaluation Team representing the
Middle States Commission on Higher Education

Prepared after study of the institution’s self-study report
and a visit to the campus on March 27-30, 2011

The Members of the Team:

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Working with the Team:

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This report represents the views of the evaluation team as interpreted by the Chair, and it goes
directly to the institution before being considered by the Commission.

It is a confidential document prepared as an educational service for the benefit of the institution.
All comments in the report are made in good faith, in an effort to assist Old Westbury.

This report is based solely on an educational evaluation of the institution and of the manner in
which it appears to be carrying out its educational objectives.
AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT:

President/CEO:

Dr. Calvin O. Butts, III
President
SUNY College at Old Westbury, New York

Chief Academic Officer:

Dr. Patrick O’Sullivan
Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs
SUNY College at Old Westbury, New York

College Council Chair (campus):

Old Westbury College Council
Gary I. Wadler

Chancellor of the SUNY System:

Dr. Nancy L. Zimpher
Chancellor
State University of New York Central Office

Board of Trustees Chair (system):

Carl T. Hayden
Chair
State University of New York
I. **Context and Nature of the Visit**

**Institutional Overview:**
- Initial Accreditation: 1965
- Last Reaffirmed: 2001
- Control: Public
- Affiliation: Supervised by the State University of New York
- Institution Type: Baccalaureate

**Scope of Institution at Time of Visit:**
- Degrees Offered: Certificate/Diploma, Baccalaureate, Masters
- Branch Campuses: None

**Self-Study Design:**
- Comprehensive, with three areas of special emphasis: leadership transition, assessment of student learning, and strategic planning.

II. **Affirmation of Continued Compliance with Eligibility Requirements**

Based on a review of the self-study, interviews, the certification statement supplied by the institution and other institutional documents, the team affirms that the State University of New York College at Old Westbury continues to meet the eligibility requirements in *Characteristics of Excellence*.

III. **Compliance with Federal Requirements**

Based on review of the self-study, certification by SUNY College at Old Westbury, and interviews, the team affirms that the institution’s Title IV cohort default rate is within federal limits. Additionally, the team is unaware of any problematic issues relative to state regulatory requirements.

IV. **Evaluation Overview**

The Team extends sincere gratitude for the wonderful hospitality shown to us by the entire Old Westbury community during our four-day visit to the beautiful Old Westbury campus. The Team also commends Old Westbury for the forthright and thorough self-study which was created and made available to us. It enabled the Team to better understand the important challenges that Old Westbury faces as well as to appreciate the great progress the College has made toward overcoming some of its largest obstacles.

Finally, the Team congratulates the Old Westbury family for rising to the occasion of the 2011 Middle States accreditation review process. It was clearly an effort involving hundreds of key stakeholders and the Old Westbury community is to be commended for the quality of that effort.
Overall, SUNY College at Old Westbury knows its mission and is performing in an exemplary manner, and its members are energetic, innovative and enthusiastic about life and the quality of their services to the students and the community at large. The Team believes strongly that this academic institution is a place of utmost integrity, responsibility, dedication, and remarkable professionalism, all which fosters rigorous student learning and development. The College at Old Westbury is to be commended for its many accomplishments over the past decade, including:

- Staying true to its mission while growing enrollment by 45% from 1999 to 2010, increasing selectivity, maintaining diversity and raising retention and graduation rates;
- Adding three major buildings, as well as rebuilding and renovating major buildings and facilities, and upgrading technology;
- Developing an award-winning First-Year Experience (FYE) program and establishing an Honors College;
- Ranking first in diversity among all national liberal arts colleges, according to U.S. News and World Report;
- Establishing three schools for its academic departments and reorganizing administrative offices;
- Establishing 15 master’s level degree programs, all with enrollment growth;
- Achieving NCATE accreditation for its School of Education in 2006, and AACSBB candidacy for its School of Business in 2007. and acceptance of its AACSBB accreditation plan in 2009;
- Successfully completing the most inclusive strategic planning process in its history and enhancing its reputation within SUNY and New York State; and
- Raising its admission selectivity rating to level 3 (very selective).

V. Compliance with Accreditation Standards

Standard 1: Mission and Goals

Standard 6: Integrity

Chapter 2 of the Self-Study Report

Standard 1: “The institution’s mission clearly defines its purpose within the context of higher education and indicates who the institution serves and what it intends to accomplish. The institution’s stated goals, consistent with the aspirations and expectations of higher education, clearly specify how the institution will fulfill its mission. The mission and goals are developed and recognized by the institution with the participation of its members and its governing body and are used to develop and shape its programs and practices and to evaluate its effectiveness.”

Standard 6: “In the conduct of its programs and activities involving the public and the constituencies it serves, the institution demonstrates adherence to ethical standards and its own stated policies, providing support for academic and intellectual freedom.”
The institution meets these standards.

Summary of Evidence and Findings:
SUNY College at Old Westbury has a Mission Statement that “clearly defines its purpose within the context of higher education and explains whom the institution serves and what it intends to accomplish.” The College at Westbury is a four-year comprehensive public institution within the State University of New York’s 64-campus system, with 39 undergraduate degree programs and 15 graduate level programs within its 17 academic departments that constitute the three schools: School of Arts & Sciences (SAS), School of Business (SOB), and School of Education (SOE). Ten years ago, the members of the institution revised and redefined the mission and goals. Within the past two years, the mission and goals were reaffirmed during a strategic planning process. This strategic planning process was all inclusive and the most collaborative effort in the history of the institution. Today, SUNY College at Old Westbury’s mission statement primarily emphasizes “excellent public liberal arts education,” which is anchored on “our historic values of diversity, intercultural understanding, community engagement, and social justice” (Self-Study 2011, xiv). Intrinsic in these core values are student-centered learning, teaching effectiveness, faculty scholarship, and service to both the surrounding community and the global village.

The current redefined and reaffirmed Mission Statement notes that the institution “is a dynamic and diverse public liberal arts college that fosters academic excellence through close interaction among students, faculty and staff” and, by creating the necessary conditions for “critical thinking, empathy, creativity and intercultural understanding, we endeavor to stimulate a passion for learning and a commitment to building a more just and sustainable world.” The members of the Old Westbury campus community embrace and fully support the statement that the College “is a community of students, teachers, staff, and alumni bound together in mutual support, respect, and dedication to the Mission.” And the team concurs that this statement provides an accurate representation of the SUNY College at the time of the accreditation re-affirmation visit.

The mission is guided by the vision to make the institution competitive in the global market economy by “offering quality undergraduate and graduate degrees in the arts and sciences, and professional areas to 4500 students on an attractive campus conducive to the needs of a growing residential and commuter student body.” The team agrees with the appropriateness of the six principles inherent in the College’s reaffirmed mission: (1) liberal education, (2) integrity, (3) participatory governance, (4) intercultural understanding, (5) sustainability, and (6) social justice, all which will enable the key stakeholders to become successful in a manner consistent with the mission.

In light of this redefined and reaffirmed mission with its five strategic goals (Self-Study 2011, pp. 12-13), the College (its faculty, administrators, staff and the other governing bodies) is better positioned and well-guided to make decisions with reference to strategic planning, resource allocation and management, sponsor academic programs and curricular development, and policy implementation and provide transformative leadership for future organizational change. Based on the review of the self-study, other institutional documents and interviews with faculty, staff, and students, SUNY College at Old Westbury continues to maintain an atmosphere of excellence and integrity rooted in its adherence to ethical standards, supports an environment of intellectual and academic freedom, inclusiveness and cultural sensitivity, and participatory
governance. Article #2 of its Guiding Principles states succinctly how the College conducts itself: “because all human relationships, as well as a just society, rely on the principles of truth, trust and fairness, Old Westbury is committed to the highest ethical standards in academic, institutional and community life” (Self-Study Report 2011, Table 2.01). Integrity has become central to what is done and learned at this institution, with the inherent objectives for global citizenship and achieving social justice. “The Ethics of Engagement: Educating Leaders for a Just World” has become a mandatory first-year seminar and freshman orientation initiative, in addition to “A Liberal Education” course that is designed to challenge students to cultivate the right values and widen their intellectual horizon and familiarize them with the College’s redefined and reaffirmed mission and goals. Discussions with faculty supported the self-study finding of a campus atmosphere of acceptance, cultural sensitivity and learner-support designed to increase retention and graduation rates. Members of the College campus pride themselves on “open and honest communication both internally and externally” with the obvious conclusion that “We are in compliance with this standard in our ethical standards, policies, implementation of policies, and support for intellectual freedom” (Self-Study Report 2011, p. 14). The College seems to have a high standard of integrity with respect to equity and diversity issues, and adheres to ethical standards in implementing its employee-related policies, including those related to faculty appointment and the granting of tenure and promotion. In all, we are told that SUNY College at Old Westbury “is bound by a number of documents and procedures that define its responsibilities towards its employees and its students” (Self-Study Report 2011, p. 14).

The College’s Office of Human Resources has made available some critical policy and procedure documents concerning academic integrity, discrimination and anti-harassment, domestic violence in the workplace, affirmative action, collective bargaining agreements, the Board of Trustees policies, the student handbook, faculty bylaws, etc., in an effort to illustrate that the institution practices integrity when it notes that it “is reasonably equitable, fair, and consistent in the implementation of its policies” (Self-Study Report 2011, p. 14). The College’s documents, such as catalogs and other handbooks, are available in print and on the website, and they demonstrate appropriate and accurate representations of what is offered on the Old Westbury campus in the conduct of academic programs and other learning-related activities. Overall, there is a climate of collegiality, friendship and a sense of common purpose throughout the campus with students, the faculty and staff, and the entire administration.

The team concurs with the statements on strengths, concerns and recommendations by the Workgroup for Chapter Two with respect to Standards 1 and 6 of the Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education.

**Standard 2:** Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal

**Standard 3:** Institutional Resources

**Chapter 3 of the Self-Study Report**

**Standard 2:** “An institution conducts ongoing planning and resource allocation based on its mission and goals, develops objectives to achieve them, and utilizes the results of its assessment activities for institutional renewal. Implementation and subsequent evaluation of the success of the strategic plan and resource allocation support the development and change necessary to improve and to maintain institutional quality.”
Standard 3: “The human, financial, technical, physical facilities, and other resources necessary to achieve an institution’s mission and goals are available and accessible. In the context of the institution’s mission, the effective and efficient uses of the institution’s resources are analyzed as part of ongoing outcomes assessment.”

- The institution meets these standards. [Note that strategic planning is one of the areas of special emphasis identified in the Old Westbury self-study.]

Summary of Evidence and Findings:

- Institutional planning occurs at both the State University of New York (SUNY) system level and at Old Westbury. At the system level, the planning framework is expressed in a Memorandum of Understanding that is updated from time to time, with the last update dated 2006. The new chancellor of SUNY is making changes in system-wide planning and in the role of the colleges and universities in establishing, implementing and assessing plans and outcomes. One result of the unfolding changes at the system level is that greater emphasis is being placed on planning at the campus level.
- At Old Westbury, the Strategic Plan (2010) is the key document for planning – and also provides the framework for important assessment activities. Other planning documents include the Facilities Master Plan.
- The Strategic Plan was developed via a highly inclusive process that involved more than 200 members from all constituencies of the college community.
- The Strategic Plan is presented using a balanced scorecard approach, with the result that it has objectives that are both meaningful and measurable.
- The Resource Allocation and Budget Planning Committee (RAPBC) is in the process of being constituted in an effort to establish an effective means of consultation and communication on a variety of administrative and governance matters.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices:

- The Self-Study reported, and the team agrees, that there was greater transparency and inclusiveness in the 2010 strategic planning process than in previous planning processes.
- The Strategic Plan is well organized, focusing on several major goals, with well articulated subordinate objectives.
- The new Facilities Master Plan draws on and is informed by the Strategic Plan.

Suggestions:

- While Old Westbury’s planning processes are complex and comprehensive, and some of the plans are well integrated with the Strategic Plan, the overall planning function could benefit from an effort to ensure that all of the various planning processes and documents are integrated and coordinated more effectively.
- While there are regular reviews of Old Westbury’s progress on its various plans, it would be useful to review and update the Strategic Plan on an annual basis, even if the only result is to reaffirm the Plan’s action items and leave them unchanged.
In planning for continuing growth in enrollment, the College should carefully balance such factors as revenues versus 1) costs, 2) effects on overall quality of the Old Westbury experience for students, and 3) the ability of faculty and staff to provide the instructional and support services that would be required by a student body of a given size.

The following recommendation of the Self-Study is supported by the visiting team: Recommendation 3.01: Create an IT Governance Committee as indicated in the Strategic Plan.

Summary of Evidence and Findings:

- During a time of austerity and budgetary constraint, the administration of Old Westbury has managed to allocate its financial resources in such a way that all mission-critical functionality has been maintained at reasonable levels of quality and effectiveness.

- The President and administration are responsible for Old Westbury’s budget, but have little control over many important budgetary considerations. There are two areas that are particularly problematic: first, tuition increases are set by the state legislature and thus are subject to intense political influence; secondly, salary increases for unionized employees are negotiated by the Governor’s Office of Employee Relations. These problems are exacerbated by the fact that, as with all public institutions of higher education across the country, Old Westbury’s appropriation is set through a process controlled by the political branches of the New York state government.

- The consequence of the aforementioned factors controlled by forces beyond the campus, and which may lack first-hand knowledge of the campus, is that the President and administration are routinely faced with enormous problems in both balancing the budget and finding funds for new initiatives.

- Within this challenging set of circumstances, the President and administration have been reasonably effective in identifying the cuts in expenditures that would do the least damage and as they struggle to function within the limited resources that are available.

- Overall, the physical facilities of Old Westbury are adequate and adequately maintained, in spite of reductions in maintenance and support staff. Deferred maintenance has received great attention in recent years and currently is at a manageable level with the exception of the Academic Village, which is expected to be taken out of service when the new academic building has been completed.

- Recent major construction projects include a new student union, a 750-bed housing complex, and a 147,000 sq. ft. academic building that is currently under construction and will be completed in 2012.

- When complete, the new academic building, together with other existing buildings, will fully meet the classroom needs of the current student body.

- Although constrained by multiple years of budget deficits, the faculty and staff of Old Westbury continue to be adequate in numbers to fulfill the College’s needs. However, there are some areas where faculty or staff workloads, including numbers of advisees per faculty member, are considerably heavier than the institutional
average. This has resulted, in part, from both historical patterns and chance-based concentrations of departures.

- The proportion of sections taught by adjuncts is close to 50%.
- While the IPEDS financial statements show deficits for operational and non-operational revenues and expenses for the last two fiscal years, the inflow and outflow of cash has been in balance. This has been accomplished by budget reductions and by utilization of increased revenues from auxiliary operations to absorb expenses.
- Old Westbury’s administrative information system is well managed and effective in meeting the needs of the institution, though reductions in staffing have resulted in occasionally slow service in resolving non-emergency problems.
- The College’s Library has struggled to meet the needs of its constituencies in recent years, but has still managed to provide reasonably effective service.

**Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices:**

- Cost effectiveness has become a critical guiding principle in program operation and budget decision making.
- Recent efforts to diversify revenue sources have been successful in spite of a difficult economic climate.
- The Self-Study notes, and the team agrees, that the following accomplishments are noteworthy: (1) budget growth (72%) over the past 10 years (in spite of SUNY/state cuts) partly as a result of the development of additional sources of revenue to help stabilize college finances; and (2) new facilities, the renovation of older facilities, and technology renewal.

**Suggestions:**

- Additional efforts should be made to identify the departments and functions that have suffered as a result of Old Westbury’s fiscal constraints and to find funding to ameliorate the difficulties of those that have been most affected.
- The following recommendation from the Self-Study is supported by the visiting team: Recommendation 3.03: Increase non-tuition revenues from sources such as facilities rentals, winter/summer sessions, load shedding, alumni donations or through energy savings.

**Standard 4: Leadership and Governance**

**Standard 5: Administration**

Chapter 4 of the Self-Study Report

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

**Standard 5:** “The institution’s administrative structure and services facilitate learning and research/scholarship, foster quality improvement, and support the institution’s
organization and governance.”

- The institution meets these standards. [Note that leadership transition is one of the areas of special emphasis identified in the Old Westbury self-study.]

Summary of Evidence and Findings:
The College president is the chief administrative officer, visionary and leader, appointed and responsible for the day-to-day “running of the college and promotes its development and effectiveness,” yet accountable to the SUNY Board of Trustees and the SUNY Chancellor. SUNY governance and administrative structures define the specific leadership roles and functions of the Board of Trustees, the SUNY Chancellor, the College president, the Old Westbury College Council, the University Council of Presidents, Faculty Senate, and the Student Assembly. Based upon written documents and interviews, it appears that the College has a well-defined autonomous system of governance and written policies that clearly outlines the administrative functions and responsibilities of the president, his cabinet members, and all others within the SUNY system. The Team commends the faculty, staff, and administrators for doing their best to keep the University running smoothly, for making progress despite unprecedented past administrative challenges, and for their renewed effort in planning organizational change in the right direction.

SUNY College at Old Westbury has a clear system of governance in consultation with the key stakeholders, including the College Council, the Faculty Senate, and the Student Government Organization. These stakeholders are integral parts of the governance process, although there is still the issue of appropriate faculty involvement in the ‘shared governance’ process. There continues to be some tension between the president and faculty governance over the definition of ‘consultation,’ a situation that needs to be resolved in the interests of all of Old Westbury’s stakeholders.

SUNY College at Old Westbury’s administrative leadership appears to have well-qualified, highly competent and experienced individuals in the key positions as appropriate to support the mission of the institution. Though the College continues to experience significant personnel shortages, it is in an enviable position since the College is well able to serve its constituents, facilitate student learning, and promote research/scholarship, as well as make the necessary adjustments for continued and positive quality improvement to support effectively the institution’s governance and leadership. The Self-Study notes that all but two of the top administrators of the College were appointed under the leadership of the current president/CEO. The leadership transition has been transformational and remarkable, resulting in unprecedented accomplishments in academic programs, administrative infrastructure, increase in student enrollment and performance, growth in the area of finances, state and national recognitions, institution of the award-winning First-Year Experience Program and the Honors’ College, the NCATE accreditation, etc.

In the conduct of its programs and activities involving the public and the constituencies it serves, the institution demonstrates adherence to ethical and professional standards in its stated policies, thereby providing adequate support, resources and exemplary leadership for academic and
intellectual freedom. The institution has a healthy and conducive climate that fosters respect, honesty, tenacity of purpose and growth of ideas.

There is adequate information of an appropriate decision-making system with clear lines of authority necessary to support the work of the administration. Information appears to be freely shared and communicated, and no issues surfaced regarding lack of communication during the visit, with the exceptions of: (1) improving the communication channel, such as the website, “to publicize and integrate mission into daily college life,” and (2) resources and serious maintenance for the University’s website in order “to operate effectively” (Self-Study Report 2011, p. 18). Importantly, there appears to be a collegial and collaborative relationship between some individuals and management, although there is concern for transparency in the decision-making process and with matters of conflict resolution. The team agrees that: “All offices, including academic departments, should institute a standardized process for the registration and resolution of complaints and grievances” (Self-Study Report 2011, p. 18). The Team also believes that this may also help develop greater levels of trust between the administration and faculty governance.

The team concurs with the statements on strengths, concerns and recommendations by the Workgroup for Chapter 4 with respect to Standards 4 and 5 of the Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education.

**Standard 8: Student Admissions and Retention**

**Standard 9: Student Support Services**

Chapter 5 of the Self-Study Report

**Standard 8:** “The institution seeks to admit students whose interests, goals, and abilities are congruent with its mission and seeks to retain them through the pursuit of the students’ educational goals.”

**Standard 9:** “The institution provides student support services reasonably necessary to enable each student to achieve the institution’s goals for students.”

- The institution meets these standards.

**Summary of Evidence and Findings:**

Examination of materials provided and interviews conducted during the site visit made it clear that the College at Old Westbury has developed admissions policies and procedures that enable it to admit students whose interests, goals, and abilities are congruent with its mission. The team found evidence that the institution actively gathers data that will assist decision-makers in improving services so that student retention rates can be improved. The College has also engaged in a thoughtful analysis of the changing demographics of its recruitment areas and has initiated recruitment strategies that are responsive to these changes.

In pursuit of “academic excellence,” Old Westbury articulated three Enrollment Management goals in its Strategic Plan: (1) increase enrollments; (2) raise admissions standards; and (3) increase student diversity.
Between Fall 2000 and Fall 2010, enrollments grew more than 45% and moved above 4,000 students for the first time since 1995. In Fall 2008, the college elevated admission standards enough to move Old Westbury from SUNY Selectivity Group 5 (general admissions) to SUNY Selectivity Group 3 (very selective). Enrollment was diversified due to deliberate recruitment strategies which targeted recruitment activities in areas with high concentrations of diverse students. The success was acknowledged by the U.S. News & World Report, which ranked Old Westbury first among all national liberal arts colleges in diversity for 2011.

The Team applauds the efforts to increase retention and graduation rates of students and reduce time-to-degree, as well as Old Westbury’s continued development of mechanisms which encourage and enable students to complete on time. These mechanisms also include a set of checks and balances that allow for humane and compassionate extensions when warranted.

Student retention remains the college’s major enrollment problem and priority. Increasing the college year-to-year retention rates and overall six-year graduation rates would make the overall goal of increasing enrollments easier. While retention and six-year graduation rates remain below the average for FTC students for all SUNY comprehensive colleges and the national mean for all public baccalaureate institutions, EOP students had higher graduation rates than those of all Old Westbury FTC students.

Old Westbury has developed a number of programs and initiatives designed to attract students to the college, encourage them to stay, and help them achieve success. The College is expanding both its award-winning First Year Program (FYE) and the popular Honors College. The institution has designed new approaches to mathematics courses—PowerTrack Math—and offers both a Math Learning Center and a redesigned Writing Center to help students at all levels with coursework.

As well, in recent years, the Office of Student Affairs has introduced new initiatives to strengthen existing programs in order to improve campus services and student skills. These include summer and winter orientations, new academic learning communities (grouping some residential students by areas of study) and new residential life programs. Old Westbury’s residential students are approximately 90% students of color and are, for the most part, first generation college students. The College encourages residential students’ personal development, while at the same time improving retention rates and working to ensure campus diversity.

Suggestions:
• The Team applauds Old Westbury for its efforts in recruiting students from diverse backgrounds. To enhance the yield of admitted students from these populations, Old Westbury should continue (and even step up) its current efforts to track admitted applicants from diverse backgrounds who decide not to enroll in order to analyze the patterns and to adjust practices accordingly where possible.

• The Team commends Old Westbury’s usage of admissions data. The institution particularly encourages continual review of application data in relation to subsequent student success rates in order to examine the extent to which indicators, used to make admissions decisions,
The Team suggests that the College at Old Westbury determine how to retain a greater number of white students, and close the achievement gap between this group and African-American students.

The Team suggests: (1) more effective identification of the barriers which may contribute to higher attrition rates; (2) careful assessment of the needs of students; (3) the setting of measurable retention goals, and (4) more effective coordination of these retention efforts.

Old Westbury’s student support services and functions are appropriate for its mission and student body, and the institution is fortunate to have outstanding leaders in its student and academic affairs divisions. The college provides a wide range of student support services through its divisions of Student Affairs and Academic Affairs, as well as through other divisions. These services support the college mission in a variety of ways. Academic services and departmental campus programs enable students to achieve an excellent education and help turn them into life-long learners.

Community engagement fosters students’ awareness of themselves as citizens in local, regional, national, and global contexts. The multi-racial/ethnic/cultural campus environment and student interactions can bring students to an understanding of, and appreciation for, racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity. The Division of Student Affairs speaks for everyone when it states on its campus website its commitment to “creating an environment that promotes cross cultural understanding as well as sensitivity and tolerance to differences.”

Both the academic and student affairs areas were structured to provide experiences and services that support the academic mission of the college; to work in collaboration with faculty, the Student Government Association and others in the college community; and to enhance student leadership skills, foster citizenship, promote ethical behavior, and facilitate self-understanding.

Over the past ten years, Student Affairs has grappled with problems inherent in bringing a large number of first-generation students from different backgrounds and different communities to participate in a single college community. With the hiring of the vice president for Student Affairs in 2008, significant changes were made to engage students and have their voices heard in college policies and procedures. As a result, in Spring 2009, Residence Hall Councils in each hall and an “umbrella” Residence Hall Association were founded. In addition, the Student Government Association (SGA) was reorganized to more accurately reflect proportions of residence hall and commuter senators, since commuters had been under-represented. A new position was created, Assistant to the Dean, and this individual has been charged with developing programs and services that would connect commuter students more closely to the college and to provide appropriate services as needs warrant.

The division of Academic Affairs also has several areas of student support services under its jurisdiction: Academic Advising, EOP, the First Year Experience, CSTEP and LSAMP, the
Honors College, the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (OSSD), the Math Learning Center, and the Writing Center. All of these programs and/or centers—with the exception of Academic Advising—have missions linked to the college mission (or statements of purpose) and are posted online or in the college catalog. All have appropriately qualified professional staff and all have assessment measures (usually specialized student surveys and/or questions in the SUNY administered Student Opinion Survey and NSSE) in place.

The First Year Experience, the Honors College, the Math Learning Center, PowerTrack Math and the Powertrack Math/College Algebra Math Lab, and the Writing Center are all relatively new (or newly revitalized) programs at the college. The First Year Experience and the Honors College aim at attracting and retaining students at the college. The Math and Writing Centers address critical skills crucial to students’ academic success. In addition, older academic support programs—such as EOP, CSTEP/LSAMP, and OSSD—continue to provide solid pathways for student success.

The Team endorses the institutional strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations by the Workgroup for this chapter.

Suggestions:
- The Team found evidence that the College at Old Westbury has created programs and services designed to support students’ academic achievement, contribute to their personal growth, encourage healthy lifestyles, and develop a sense of community on the campus. In addition, there was considerable evidence that the faculty and staff at the institution consistently demonstrate a deep sense of commitment to students and their success.

- In spite of budget cuts and acute funding problems, the Team commends student support services for the overall set of new initiatives and best practices designed to further engage students and increase retention and graduation rates.

- The Team suggests that the institution should measure the effectiveness of the various student support programs in retaining and graduating students on time.

- The Team applauds the higher retention and graduation rates for the EOP students. The Team suggests that the retention strategies and practices be applied to the entire student population.

**Standard 10: Faculty**

**Chapter 6 of the Self-Study Report**

**Standard 10:** “The institution’s instructional, research, and service programs are devised, developed, monitored, and supported by qualified professionals.”

- The institution meets this standard.

**Summary of Evidence and Findings:**

*Faculty Composition*
The academic programs are divided into three schools: School of Arts and Sciences (SAS), School of Business (SOB), and the School of Education (SOE).

Diversity
The student population is diverse. Faculty ethnic categories have increased since 1999 in each category except Hispanic American.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
<td>33.2%</td>
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<td>Asian American</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-resident Alien</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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Qualifications
The total faculty with PhD or other terminal degrees in the School of Arts and Sciences, the School of Business and the School of Education is 84.8%, meeting the goal recommended in the SUNY MOU’s of 2000 and 2006.

Adjuncts
The increased use of adjunct faculty is a concern across the schools. However, the higher percentage of use occurs in the School of Arts and Sciences. The use of teaching faculty who carry a 4-4 load has been introduced to address the need for additional sections. This model has been used in other colleges, but has met substantial opposition at Old Westbury. Each school identifies a mechanism for orientation, review, and evaluation of adjuncts and some note the use of persons who are seasoned within their departments. Maintaining the departments’ standards requires adjunct faculty to be well informed of the mission and the curriculum.

Procedures for Tenure and Promotion
Departments follow established protocols of the United University Professions (UUP) union and the College for the review and evaluation of regular and adjunct faculty. External reviewers were recommended in the last Middle States Review and their use was noted by the Appointment, Reappointment Promotion, and Tenure (ARPT) Committee.

Program Development
Faculty Support
Each school is engaged in ongoing curriculum development and the self study notes “support of diversity in faculty research, in course curricula, in course offerings …”

The deans indicated they used a curriculum review committee, and full faculty discussion occurred regarding initiatives. The School of Education reported interdisciplinary initiatives with respect to content and assessment. Concerns about faculty and program support were mentioned. Some remedies have been implemented. Continuing discussion is expected. The
establishment of a new Budget Committee is also expected to provide assistance in prioritizing funding resources and allocations.

While more than half of the faculty noted “respect for the expression of diverse values and beliefs” (p. 69) there was no indication of how diverse content is integrated into course content across disciplines. Courses in general education that meet diversity content may not necessarily address students’ need for self-representation via culturally relevant materials in courses, especially in math and science.

A review of a small sample of syllabi across the colleges revealed a range of syllabi structure. The syllabi in the School of Education are on-line. The structure was consistent across disciplines to include several categories that clearly articulated the course content and expectations for student performance. These categories included but are not limited to: course description, relationship to conceptual framework, course rationale and objectives, competencies, literacy and thinking skills, professional conduct, use of related software, websites, and definition of terms. The location of rubrics for the course assessment was noted.

Syllabi from the different departments in the School of Business were similarly structured. The categories included but were not limited to: course description, objectives, assessment, prerequisites, plagiarism (academic integrity), accommodations policy, and the vision, mission and values of the Department, pledge to uphold the Code of Ethics, and professional preparation. Several syllabi contained specific instructions for assignments, cell phone and iPod policy, content and skills, rubrics and bibliography.

The School of Arts and Sciences, which comprises the largest number of faculty and contains a broad range of disciplines, reflected the most variation in syllabi structure. The formats ranged from very brief outlines of content, textbooks and readings, to more comprehensive ones with objectives, learning outcomes, plagiarism policy, accommodations policy, web links, assessment and rubrics. The more comprehensive syllabi offered the student clear descriptions of the course content, expectations of student learning and ability, expectations of behavior in the classroom, detailed information on work expectations related to assignments, and provided a rubric for the students to be aware of how their work would be measured and graded.

Assessment of learning outcomes was addressed with respect to the domains of general education, but procedures for faculty connecting courses to department goals, collecting assessment of learning data, and monitoring progress were not readily identified. These dynamics may be included in on-going program development discussions. Organizing the course content and assessment of the students’ knowledge will require a system of faculty support.

Student Feedback
Students appreciate the small class size and the potential to develop close relationships with faculty. Several noted increased opportunities to participate in conferences and other learning activities because of these relationships. They described faculty support of their learning needs via office hours, telephone and email support as well as through the Writing and Math centers.
On the other hand, some students raised concern with adjunct faculty who are not eligible for tenure and have several part-time schedules at different schools. In this case the student was describing that faculty member’s lack of ability to develop a good student–teacher relationship, and lack of awareness of who the student was, due to multiple school obligations.

Overall, the College has well-qualified faculty who are committed to program development through existing protocols and those established through professional accrediting bodies.

**Standard 11: Educational Offerings**

**Standard 12: General Education**

**Standard 13: Related Educational Activities**

**Chapter 7 of the Self-Study Report**

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

**Standard 12:** “The institution’s curricula are designed so that students acquire and demonstrate college-level proficiency in general education and essential skills, including at least oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, and technological competency.”

**Standard 13:** “The institution’s programs or activities that are characterized by particular content, focus, location, mode of delivery, or sponsorship meet appropriate standards.”

- The institution meets these standards.

**Summary of Evidence and Findings:**

**Standard 11: Educational Offerings**

The college offers 39 undergraduate degree programs and 15 graduate programs through its three schools and 17 departments. Thirty of the undergraduate degree programs are offered through SAS, nine of these in collaboration with the SOE. Thirteen of the graduate programs are offered through SAS, 12 of these jointly with the SOE. The SOB offers five undergraduate and two graduate degree programs and the SOE offers 13 undergraduate degree programs, nine of which are offered jointly with SAS, and 12 graduate degree programs, all offered jointly with SAS. Most undergraduate courses carry four credits, and graduate courses carry three credits.

New and substantially revised programs must be approved at both the college and system levels. Requiring a minimum of two years to complete, the program approval process demands that the college demonstrate coherence, rigor, and alignment with the institution’s mission, and that the college has qualified faculty to implement the program. Since 2000, SUNY policies have required all academic departments and degree programs to undergo full program reviews every five years. The program review process has included a self-evaluation, which requires assessment of student learning, and review by an external consultant. At the college level, each
program review must be reviewed and approved by the Curriculum and Academic Planning Committee, Faculty Senate, and Academic Affairs. The college’s degree programs, including the relatively large numbers that have been recently approved, align with the institution’s newly-revised mission statement and strategic plan.

The School of Education is accredited by NCATE, which attests to the quality and rigor of its programs, and the School of Business has achieved candidacy for AACSB accreditation, also a noteworthy accomplishment. Within the School of Arts and Sciences, the chemistry program is accredited by the American Chemical Society. Largely due to the requirements of these accrediting bodies, degree programs offered through SOE and SOB have clearly articulated student learning outcomes (SLOs) and systematic assessment practices in place. Programs offered through SAS have begun the process of articulating SLOs for their courses and are at various stages of assessing these.

Standard 12: General Education
The college’s General Education requirements exceed SUNY’s requirements in both number of credits and number of domains required. While not mandated by SUNY, Old Westbury’s general education program has always required, and continues to require, students to take a course in diversity, a focus central to the institution’s history and mission. In addition, all undergraduates, no matter what their major, must take two semesters of English composition, satisfy math proficiency (usually by taking at least one math course), and take a lab science course.

A learning community-based First-Year Experience (FYE) has been implemented for all first-time students at the college and consists of a four-credit course in the fall (tied to one other course) and a two-credit course in the spring (that includes a community research component). The design of the FYE meshes with the college’s mission.

Standard 13: Related Educational Activities
Structured internships are available through several degree programs. Individual departments are responsible for establishing policies and procedures dealing with the implementation of internships, while keeping within the SUNY guidelines for doing so. The college should assess internships in terms of specific student learning outcomes.

The college has recently received approval to offer six advanced certificates in adolescent education.

The college offers some courses in distance learning and blended formats using Angel courseware. Standardized assessment of distance learning courses should be developed and adopted across the curriculum.

Strengths, Concerns, and Recommendations for Standards 11, 12, and 13:
Strengths
(1) Processes for program approvals and departmental and programmatic review are rigorous and ensure program excellence.
(2) Gen Ed requirements are well defined, rigorous, and contribute significantly to student learning.
Concerns
(1) SUNY will no longer oversee program and assessment processes.
(2) College Gen Ed requirements are more demanding than SUNY basic requirements.

Suggestions:
Given the latitude given to faculty to develop new courses of interest to them, a number of courses exist in the catalog that are not taught frequently due to staffing shortages and the need to offer required courses. The college should initiate a systematic review of course listings to determine which electives can and cannot be offered.

The Team is adopting as Suggestions the following self-study recommendations:
  7.01: College should address SUNY’s changed role in reviews/assessments and review its own Gen Ed requirements in this light.
  7.03: SAS should systematize the mechanisms through which departments disseminate program-specific student learning outcomes to students.
  7.04: Need to assess internship programs/experiences across colleges.
  7.05: Certificate programs should be reviewed.

Standard 7: Institutional Assessment
Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning
Chapter 8 of the Self-Study Report

Standard 7: “The institution has developed and implemented an assessment process that evaluates its overall effectiveness in achieving its mission and goals and its compliance with accreditation standards.”

Standard 14: “Assessment of student learning demonstrates that, at graduation, or other appropriate points, the institution’s students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional and appropriate higher education goals.”

- The institution meets these standards. [Note that Standard 14 (Assessment of Student Learning) is an area of special emphasis identified in the Old Westbury self-study.]

Summary of Evidence and Findings:
- The Team commends Old Westbury for having significantly expanded its institutional assessment activities, as it now has a documented assessment process with clear, realistic guidelines and timetable that contributes to a growing ability to evaluate institutional effectiveness in the context of mission and goals.
- Indeed, an important element in the assessment of institutional effectiveness at Old Westbury is the review of the president of the College by the SUNY chancellor. Each year, the College’s president reports to the chancellor regarding the overall quality of the institution, the financial health of the institution, progress on goal achievement, problems that arose during the year and goals for the succeeding year. The chancellor reviews the report and meets with the College’s president to discuss the College’s overall effectiveness and to
finalize goals for the succeeding year. Once every five years, a more elaborate formal evaluation of the president and of the College’s effectiveness is conducted.

- Currently, as noted in the self-study report, each of the college’s eight functional divisions carries out its own assessment process and divisional vice presidents report progress on their goals in written monthly reports, at times in cabinet meetings, and in follow-up meetings with the president. Finally, cabinet members sum up their year’s work in written annual reports. The Team encourages the College to develop more formal guidelines and procedures for assessment in the non-academic units.

- Perhaps resulting from a lack of formal guidelines, the assessment efforts in non-academic divisions and departments of the college may not always clearly connect institutional assessment efforts with the assessment of student learning. One example that was repeatedly cited concerned a decision to favor admission of transfer students over FTC (first time to college) students. A number of groups expressed surprise with this decision given (1) the remarkable success of the FYE program in retaining, graduating, and promoting academic achievement among these students, and (2) efforts to increase the on-campus presence of students (Note: approximately 75% of transfer students are commuters).

- Concerns of this nature may arise, in part, due to the fact that there does not appear to be a well-established mechanism for sharing information contained in the annual reports with the campus community. The recently created Institutional Assessment Committee is seen as one possible means to begin addressing this concern.

Suggestions:

- In support of its assessment efforts, the college should plan to develop a series of key performance indicators (such as being established in the Division of Student Affairs), which will allow for a connection of performance to strategic goals on multiple dimensions. When fully developed, this model will provide a framework for the integration of planning, assessment, and management practices at Old Westbury.

- As with Standard 14, another suggestion that could assist with sharing information and the shortage of personnel is to increase institutional support for technologies (specialized software applications and personnel in IT).

- The Institutional Research and Assessment (IRA) Office is mentioned as one additional resource for assisting the eight functional divisions with collecting evidence for assessment purposes, as well as reporting to SUNY. Indeed, the 2001 Middle States report recommended that a director of IRA be hired to collect data and coordinate assessment in non-academic units. However, at this time the IRA office consists of only one person and will need to be allocated more resources if the office is to both provide standard IR reporting functions and play a larger role in assessment of institutional effectiveness.

Assessment of student learning demonstrates that, at graduation, or other appropriate points, the institution’s students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional and appropriate higher education goals.

- The College at Old Westbury has engaged in a thoughtful, critical analysis of assessment of student learning outcomes that has significantly advanced these efforts.

- The campus community clearly recognizes that the thoughtful assessment of student learning outcomes has been largely due to the efforts of the Director of Academic
Assessment (DAA) who works extensively with all three schools (SOE, SOB, and SAS). In fact, the efforts of the DAA have resulted in a dramatic increase in the understanding and involvement of other faculty in assessment efforts.

- As recognized in the self-study, academic assessment requires significant institutional resources of all types and makes significant demands on the time and energy of faculty. However, there is an obvious need to increase institutional support for academic assessment. As one example, the DAA has no formal budget, no dedicated support staff, and her position must be re-justified on a yearly basis. This results in the DAA continually scrambling to find monies to support the expanding efforts of faculty to assist with assessment efforts.

- A review of syllabi, discussions with the Old Westbury community, and a review of college publications indicate that clearly articulated statements of expected student learning outcomes intended for presentation to students is largely present. However, there are clear instances where the learning outcomes are not present on syllabi. There also appears to be unevenness across departments in programs in publicizing learning outcomes to students.

Suggestions:
- In order to make learning outcomes more transparent to students, Old Westbury should develop consistent ways of communicating expected student learning outcomes. The identification and development of learning outcomes statements must be emphasized on all course syllabi and at the program and institutional level. And once such statements are formulated, it would be useful to revise the Old Westbury website so that students may easily access the learning outcomes statements.

- In order to facilitate the identification and development of learning outcomes, a curriculum mapping procedure, similar to those used in the SOE and SOB, should be undertaken. This suggestion could also facilitate capitalizing on the overlap, in some programs, of departmental learning objectives and general education objectives. As one example, the SOB has a learning goal related to developing effective communication skills, as does the General Education program.

- As recognized in the Self-Study Report, and suggested by the need to deal with shortfalls in financial and personnel resources, the Team suggests that it is time to improve the ability to coordinate the reporting, and use of, existing data and information on student learning outcomes by expanding the use of the Tk20 system (or similar systems) currently utilized by the SOE. These comprehensive outcomes assessment systems allow institutions to collect data systematically, plan assessments, and compare assessment data against specified outcomes/objectives, and generate detailed reports for compliance, analysis, and program improvement. An additional benefit of using comprehensive outcomes assessment systems are that their use of software may facilitate the use of already existing assessments to lessen the time/energy demands on faculty.

- As referenced earlier, there is also a demonstrated need to increase the institutional support in terms of money, technical support, and support positions to advance assessment of student learning outcomes.

VI. **Recommendation:** Formalize and implement a systematic, defined assessment plan for the non-academic areas of the college
Conclusion

In conclusion, under the outstanding leadership of President Butts, Old Westbury has had an amazing ten-year period of accomplishment and growth since its last Middle States evaluation, and is clearly poised to achieve even greater heights in the years ahead. While funding concerns and other uncertainties will always have to be dealt with, the leadership of Old Westbury has shown great capacity and skill in developing alternative sources of funding. This entrepreneurial spirit may need to be expanded and cultivated even further in the years ahead, but at this point in the College’s history, the Old Westbury family is certainly entitled to a brief period of celebration for the successes of the past, before moving on to face and overcome the daunting challenges of the future. And at this time, we call on all members of the Old Westbury family to work together to make the magnificent Old Westbury dream a reality.

The Team believes that Old Westbury has a bright future ahead of it. And we, your Middle States colleagues on the Team, who share your passion and commitment to public higher education, wish you great success as you work to accomplish your noble mission.