

Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students

Of

YORK COLLEGE
of The City University of New York

Jamaica, New York

By

An Evaluation Team representing the

Middle States Commission on Higher Education

Prepared an after study of the institution's Self-Study Report

And a visit to the campus on March 2 – 5, 2008

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AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

York College President, Dr. Marcia Keizs

York College Chief Academic Officer: Provost Ivelaw Griffith

I. Context and Nature of the Visit

York College is a senior college located in Jamaica, Queens, New York. The College was established in 1966 as Alpha College by action of the Board of Higher Education of the City University of New York. In the fall of 1967, York opened its doors as the fifth CUNY Senior College.

York College's academic program is organized around math and sciences, humanities and professional programs, which include accredited programs in teacher education, nursing and social works. Recently York graduated its first class in the combined BS/MS in occupational therapy and communications technology; reflecting its spirit as a college "on the move".

The Middle State visiting team conducted its visit from March 2 – 5, 2008. The team was impressed with a campus community that was excited and inspired by its leadership and the direction in which the college is headed. The team itself was overwhelmed with the sense of hope expressed by students, faculty and staff. The team was grateful for the warmth and hospitality expressed by the York community. The self-study process and the ensuing discussions in preparation for the visit led to candid and open discussions with a cross section of the community, including a representative from the CUNY administration and the University's Board of Trustees.

The Middle States team conducted extensive interviews and toured the college facilities including a wonderful performing arts facility with its 1,500-seat auditorium and 150-seat theater. The team's review of York's curriculum, facilities, financial records, and its beginning resource development suggest that the College has resources and the capacity to obtain additional support to achieve its mission. The team was particularly pleased with the strong support expressed by CUNY for York as manifested by representatives from both the central university and the Board of Trustees.

The team commends the College and its leadership teams, for the quality of the self-study and the organization of the visit. The response of the faculty, staff, students and representatives of the central administration and the Board of Trustees, were all candid and transparent. The team was particularly impressed with the way the York community has lived up solidly to support this President and her team. The team is confident that in spite of work to be done, this self-study process has allowed a transparent process to unfold that will continue to move the College forward. In this effort, the team encourages and supports the efforts of the newly established Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. Under the guidance of President Keizs and her staff, York is poised to continue to be a college "on the move".

II. Affirmation of Continued Compliance with Eligibility Requirements.

The College meets all eligibility requirements of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

III. Compliance with Federal Requirements, Issues Relative to State Regulatory or other Accrediting Agency Requirements.

The team affirms that the institution's Title IV cohort default rate is within federal limits.

IV. Compliance with Accreditation Standards at the Time of the Visit.

President	Dr. Marcia V. Keizs
Chief Academic Officer	Dr. Ivelaw L. Griffith
Chair of the Board of Trustees	Mr. Benno C. Schmidt Jr.
System Head	Dr. Matthew Goldstein

Standard One: Mission, Goals, and Objectives

York College meets Standard One.

Summary of Evidence and Findings:

The current mission of York College was adopted in 1998. The statement defines the purpose of the institution, indicates who the institution serves, and specifies what the institution intends to accomplish. Emphasizing integrated principles of teaching, scholarship, and service, the mission statement reflects a commitment of the college to respond to the unique needs of urban students and provide students with a student-centered education experience.

The college has identified seven strategic goals with aligned strategic objectives that stem from the institutional mission. Strategic Goal V is the goal most clearly linked to the current mission statement.

York College considers the mission statement as the foundation for all institutional initiatives and activities. However, there is no formalized system of checks and balances for reviewing the institutional mission. Neither periodic nor ongoing mission review is explicitly linked to the strategic planning process.

Significant Accomplishments, Significant Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices:

1. There is a clear campus-wide commitment to support the institutional mission. This commitment to urban public education and “the special needs of an urban constituency” is a unique niche to which York College should continue to be responsive.

Suggestions:

1. Given that the mission has not been formally reviewed since 1998, York College should undertake a comprehensive mission review in conjunction with the next strategic planning process. Such a review will help create more meaningful articulation between the mission statement and strategic goals. Moreover, with increased emphasis on assessment, the college should demonstrate the use of data as a mechanism for ongoing evaluation of the mission and refinement of all strategic goals and objectives.
2. Congruency between the institutional mission statement and mission statement for general education is not especially clear. This disconnect supports the need for a comprehensive review of the institutional mission statement and general education.

Standard Two: Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal

York College meets Standard Two.

Summary of Evidence and Findings:

York's ability to develop and implement plans has grown rapidly during the past few years as the new team of lead administrators has mandated structured systems. An inclusive strategic planning process contains goals and objectives, both institution-wide and for individual units that are clearly stated, reflect conclusions drawn from assessment results, are linked to mission and goal achievement, and are used for planning and resource allocation at the institutional and unit levels. Planning and improvement processes are clearly communicated, provide for constituent participation, and incorporate the use of assessment results. Meetings with individuals drawn from across college constituencies indicated that the administration is using a very transparent process for creating, prioritizing, and implementing the strategic plan. This well-defined decision-making process facilitates planning, renewal, and assignment of responsibility for improvements and assurance of accountability. Use of both internal procedures and reports to CUNY by the lead administrators create what is becoming a culture of periodic assessment with effective planning, resource allocation, and institutional renewal. Continued attention to the planning process will result in a continuous, systematic application of best practices and will enhance understanding by faculty, administrators, staff, and students of roles in the planning process.

The planning process has, by necessity, focused on key goals and objectives. The president decided at the beginning of the five-year plan to delay consideration of the current institutional mission. It is recommended that the mission and vision be considered and possibly revised by an inclusive group of faculty, staff, students, and other stakeholders as the next five-year planning process begins. Such an effort will clarify, for example, the different paths of continuing to focus on retention efforts in support of the undergraduate program as contrasted with the potential to grow new graduate programs. York has quickly demonstrated an ability to execute plans when resources are made available. However, to attain the potential of its future it will need to begin with a series of environmental scans, a review of mission, and creation of structures that make planning and institutional renewal a way of doing things that is not tied to the strong administrative team presently serving the college.

Suggestion:

The College should continue to use the strategic planning process as a way to encourage open and clear communication. The planning and implementation of a range of objectives has led to confidence that York College is truly "on the move" and that continued progress is not only possible, but also likely.

Standard Three: Institutional Resources

York College meets Standard Three.

Summary of Evidence and Findings:

York College follows a financial planning and budgeting process that is driven by the institution's mission, goals, and plan. The plan drives the budget and makes clear use of an annual budget and multi-year budget projections, both institution-wide and among departments. A series of measurements are made that facilitate discussion of the current budget. For example, the team was presented with a snapshot of the current fiscal year budget that clearly indicated the success of the enrollment initiative. Faculty noted the transparency of the budgeting process as real and exciting, with one faculty member noting that the "world changed in 2005" with the arrival of the current administrative team. The frequent planning and budgeting meetings, web postings, and informal conversations are all used to communicate budgets so there are few surprises. The overall budget is coordinated through the CUNY central office, providing opportunities to share in costs of complementary needs, such as improved market visibility. York is working toward an "all funds" budget that will include all revenue and expenditure streams, such as the Title III grant. While much progress has been made, continued use of assessment and feedback of the plan and resource allocation methods will be needed to support ongoing and future needs.

York College is in the early stage of developing a comprehensive facilities master plan. A number of plans have already been implemented, including the numerous new affinity spaces for student and faculty interaction around campus. Courtyards, a new coffee bar, lounge areas, a men's center, and a teaching and learning center are relatively small projects that add up to a sizable improvement in the feel of the campus as a welcoming learning environment. Larger projects, such as a comprehensive space for student development, are still in the very early planning stages. An aggressive capital budget has been submitted to CUNY that, if fulfilled, will turn the York campus into one that possesses all of the learning resources fundamental to educational and research programs. The three most pressing major capital initiatives include construction of a student center, water infiltration prevention and relocation of the main power supply in the main building, and creation and implementation of a facilities renewal plan.

A consultant hired by the College undertook an extensive look at technology needs in 2005. The review pointed to a number of areas that needed improvement, such as the linking of administrative and academic computing, an upgrade of the website look and content, newer hardware and software availability, and training for enhanced helpdesk functions. The results of the past three years are impressive, with each of these areas witnessing substantial improvements. Extensive use of technology is evident in the effort to enhance communication to various stakeholders. For example, a wide range of employment policies and guidelines are available on the website, leading to the ability for any member of the campus community to understand both the policy and its best practice

implementation. The team heard a number of examples of how the technology upgrade has served both the learning and administrative functions well.

While York conducts many financial functions in dealing with students, its overall financial reporting and controls are meshed with CUNY. A review of the financial reports, the independent audit, and management letters indicates that CUNY has opportunities for improvement in a few control areas; however, the institutional controls are adequate in support of financial, administrative, and limited auxiliary operations.

York remains highly dependent on tuition and revenues provided by the state or the city, including the substantial enhancements to ongoing and one-time budgets from the CUNY Compact. A few efforts are beginning to encourage support from friends and alumni. Fundraising efforts have yielded a small amount of annual support for scholarships. A recommendation is that fundraising efforts be elevated to the level of vice presidential reporting by the next decennial visit, or preferably much sooner, so that a significant amount of funds may be raised to ease tuition pressure and to guard against cuts in government funding. CUNY has substantial plans indicated for fundraising and should be encouraged to provide up-front support to York in the design and implementation of an advancement office and comprehensive campaign.

Suggestion:

A campus-wide committee should be appointed representing faculty, students, alumni, and administrators to complete the drafting of a Facilities Master Plan. Increased student spaces, potentially including a student center, should be given major attention in the plan.

Standard Four: Leadership and Governance.

York College meets Standard Four.

Summary of Evidence and Findings:

The College is part of The City University of New York (CUNY) System and is one of several senior colleges. CUNY has a Board of Trustees at the University level. At the College, York has a tri-cameral senate with the President serving as chairperson. The Senate also has representations from both the faculty and students, in addition to the other College administrators.

There are regular meetings of several bodies including academic and non-academic departments. In addition, the President chairs the College Personnel and Budget Committee, which includes the provost, chairs of all academic departments and the chair of the Counseling Department (vice president of student development).

York enjoys an apparently very healthy relationship with CUNY. This is borne out by the increased funding received by the College in recent years. This is particularly noteworthy, as CUNY has supported York in increasing its admissions standards while it suffered a modest enrollment decline. Both the University and Trustee representative offered unqualified support for the direction York is now taking.

It is very clear that there is a healthy respect for the leadership and governance of York College. The faculty, staff and students echoed this fact consistently as all seem to support the idea that the college leadership and governing structure allows for change and stability as needed.

Commendation:

1. York College is to be commended for its outstanding leadership that seems to have turned the corner and identified new heights for the College.

Standard Five: Administration

York College meets Standard Five.

Summary of Evidence and Findings:

York College has experienced drastic changes as it has adapted to shifts in leadership during the past several years. It now operates under the guidance of a highly regarded CUNY administrator, in the person of President Keizs, whose capacity to inspire and build bridges has the College enjoying a renewed vigor. The staff that is now being welded together has established a sense of trust and confidence that runs throughout the College.

York College faculty, administrators, and staff agree that there are two eras in the administration of the college. Prior to 2005, rapid turnover in the presidency and most executive positions led to difficulties in planning and execution on a host of levels. The post-2005 executive team, while still working to permanently fill a number of positions, has steadily increased the performance of the College in three key areas identified by a member of the President's Cabinet: collegiality, trust, and ability to make data-driven decisions. Structures are being put into place that ensure continuity of a culture of success. Another administrator noted that the top executives now ask the right questions, obtain valid and reliable data, and use information to guide decision-making.

The president and lead executives have all indicated a desire to stay with York as long as it takes to get the job done. The administrative leadership over the last three years has continued to demonstrate a willingness to organize so that the best talent is available for a wide variety of tasks and challenges. The lead executives take a strong role in recruiting, selecting, and retaining the best staff to support the newfound drive to success. Metrics have been developed that document the performance of key

administrators. The metrics are tied to compensation and provide incentives for cooperation across departmental lines.

Ably assisted by its Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, York College is now better positioned to create appropriate responses to current and future student and staff needs.

Commendation:

1. York is to be commended for the stability being created with its experienced leadership of President Keizs and her executive team.

Suggestion:

1. The College leadership should quickly move to more structured support for institutional advancement. The vice president's position has been vacant for over two years and staff members indicate that it has been difficult to follow up on interest expressed by alumni. The College has a large number of dedicated staff and alumni who with some training and support could learn to work on cultivation and stewardship activities. In particular, the students are enthusiastic about the institution but have little direct connection to the College following graduation. A new hire to supervise advancement activities could then focus attention on bringing alumni and friends to campus, increasing the very small pool of individual and corporate donors, and expand efforts for focused giving in support of scholarship needs.
2. The president and CUNY should take steps to stabilize leadership of York College. The College should continue to use an inclusive process to select and retain the best candidates for cabinet-level positions. In addition, efforts should be initiated to create "bench strength" by providing additional professional development support for staff at the levels directly below the vice presidents. Much progress has been made during the past three years; however, the large amount of work that must be done to create a culture of success demands that the executive leadership team be retained and strengthened.

Standard Six: Integrity

York College meets Standard Six.

Summary of Evidence and Findings:

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.

According to Standard Six of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education's eligibility document *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education*, "Integrity is a central, indispensable and defining hallmark of effective higher education institutions." The York College *2008 Self-Study Report* documents the means by which the faculty, staff, and students are made aware of College and University policies. *Self-Study Report* candidly reports, nevertheless, that the timeliness of the College's implementation of University policy has sometimes been a "challenge."

Academic dishonesty is prohibited in the City University of New York and incurs penalties, including failing grades, suspension, and expulsion. To adjudicate cases of academic dishonesty, York College to its credit has recognized the need for and has recently instituted an Academic Integrity Committee.

By every indication, York College is fair in its hiring, evaluation, and promotion practices regarding faculty, staff, administration, and students. The College is committed to equal employment opportunity and affirmative action and to maintaining environment free of sexual harassment. As discussed in the section on faculty, York College should be commended for the thoroughness of its existing search process.

All full-time positions including faculty, non-teaching instructional staff, and classified staff are filled following an affirmative action search. To ensure the integrity of the tenure and promotion practices of the College faculty, York College maintains an ongoing process of orienting, informing, and guiding faculty members at various stages of their professional career. New faculty hires are assigned mentors and as a result of collective bargaining agreements, faculty holding professorial rank are now eligible for reassigned time not to exceed a total of 12 of the first three years of their contract or 24 of their first five years (depending upon the date of their appointment) "in order to engage themselves in scholarly and/or creative activities related to their academic disciplines." This reassignment time is intended to enable new faculty to have the opportunity to develop a record of scholarly achievement as they face the rigors of life as University professors.

At York College, students use the *Student Reaction to Teaching Effectiveness*, an anonymous survey, to evaluate instructional pedagogy, course content, requirements, and teacher dispositions. That the number of evaluations completed is low indicates that greater effort needs to be made in assuring the completion of this valuable assessment tool.

Suggestions:

Greater efforts should be made in improving communication on campus regarding the dissemination of policies and off campus in improving communication with alumni. Also, as noted, the College needs to make a greater effort to improve procedures for administering the *Student Reaction to Teaching Effectiveness* survey.

Standard Seven: Institutional Assessment

York College meets Standard Seven.

Summary of Evidence and Findings:

York College has developed and implemented an assessment process that evaluates its overall effectiveness in achieving its mission and goals and its compliance with accreditation standards. The context and framework for this process is defined by CUNY's Performance Management Process (PMP), which seeks to transform the multiple colleges of CUNY into an integrated University that guides the priorities and plans of the component colleges while respecting the distinctive identity and mission of each. The performance goals and targets for York College are set each year by the president within the context of the PMP, with input from the vice presidents and the Strategic Planning Committee. The three goals for CUNY are to raise academic quality, to improve student success, and to enhance financial and management effectiveness.

York College sets specific targets for itself each year with respect to the objectives that fall under each of these goals. The York College Office of Institutional Research and Assessment analyzes and reports the College's performance in meeting the quantitative targets each year in a report on the PMP. This report tracks performance on a given target over several years, so the current year's performance can be understood in the context of past performance. These reports include high priority measures such as percent of instruction in undergraduate courses delivered by full-time faculty, one-year retention rate of full-time first-time freshmen, six-year graduation rate of full-time first-time freshmen, total enrollment, mean SAT score of regularly-admitted first-time freshmen, mean college admissions average of regularly admitted first-time freshmen, and student satisfaction with academic support, student services and computer technology. These measures, which are published on the York College website, are easily available to anyone interested in the overall effectiveness of the college.

York College has embarked on an increasingly sophisticated form of institutional assessment that builds upon PMP, but aims at adapting it to the specific planning process of York College. The outline of this process was described in the document, "Organizational Change Through Strategic Planning: A Case for Institutional Effectiveness at York College, CUNY" (February 14, 2006), which was prepared by the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment). It was recast in "York College/CUNY Assessment Plan 2006-2009" (July 2007), which was composed by the Outcomes Assessment Committee. Both documents incorporate the five strategic goals that were adopted by the Strategic Planning Committee in April 2005, then expanded and adopted by the Senate in Spring 2006. The Assessment Plan 2006-2009 identifies nine "key assessments" (including, but not limited to, those that correspond to PMP targets) and identifies three gaps in assessment: (1) a lack of systematic, interdepartmental method of assessing student learning, (2) a lack of systematic data on success of graduates, and (3) formal documentation of the use of data-based evidence to make strategic decisions.

Commendation:

The College is to be commended for setting measurable targets under the PMP and tracking its performance on them over an extended period of time.

Suggestion:

In order to enhance its effort to link planning more firmly to assessment and resource allocation, York College should take immediate steps to implement the Self-Study Report's recommendation to unify all the research assessment and planning efforts under one unit (page 22).

Standard Eight: Admissions and Retention

York College meets Standard Eight.

Summary of Evidence and Findings:

The Enrollment Management Team presented a comprehensive overview of their activities in support of recruitment, enrollment and retention. They are commended for taking such an approach and for backing up theory with data.

The effort to recruit a stronger incoming class has begun to pay off with a significant increase in the FTE enrollment for fall 2007; an impressive 61.5% increase over the previous year. The team is not resting on its laurels nor is it accepting this increase as a definite trajectory for the future. They are wise to take the longitudinal perspective and take the fall '08 enrollment picture before firmly deciding that their decisions have had the long-term intended result.

Changes in major program offerings also should help the enrollment status of the college. It is anticipated that the addition of a generic nursing program will entice students who might not otherwise have applied to York College, but might now see it as an attractive alternative to the highly competitive program at Hunter College.

The Admissions staff is actively expanding their recruitment territory and feels that the areas where they will have the toughest inroads are also the areas that are most fertile for prospective students. These include schools in Nassau and Suffolk counties and parochial and specialized schools such as Stuyvesant and Brooklyn Tech.

They felt that the College's continued efforts at changing the culture and building a stronger reputation were essential to their ability to attract more qualified students and to continue raising the profile of the institution. They are also looking at ways to build stronger collaborations including interfacing with BOCES programs that offer similar academic areas, e.g., aviation.

In addition, the College should seek inducements for high schools students to take courses at the College and to become full-time students upon graduation. This is a resource that could be financially beneficial as well as a stimulus to academic growth.

Commendation:

The College is to be commended for hosting the fund raising gala that is providing money for scholarships. While it is understood why they are “front loading” the process, they are encouraged to outline a long-term endowment strategy for scholarships, so that as more funds become available they are ready to implement the plan.

The team learned that the College intends to create a new facilities master plan document. Crucial to the planning must be the inclusion of a student center or similar student recreation location. As the student body becomes more traditional, this type of facility will be a critical component in the decision making process for prospective students. How a campus looks and what non-academic facilities are available are often cited by researchers as more important considerations for a student deciding where to attend college, than what academic programs are available. While there are currently discussions underway with an architectural firm, there are also concerns about the intended location. A decision should be made quickly about the site plan and whether or not it is viable. In the interim and if necessary in place of a new building, efforts to add gathering locations in current buildings should be continued and focused for maximum potential.

The Retention Working Group is taking very appropriate steps to retain students and to help them succeed. Faculty members make calls to prospective students, Retention Group members make phone calls to students who have not registered, encourage them to take weekend or evening courses rather than dropping out completely and whatever else they deem possible to intervene and support student success. They term it the “Velcro Approach” - they will stick to the student for as long as necessary. In addition, programs such as “Study Up Till Midnight” offer the kind of hands-on support that first generation, those on their own, and younger students need. There is a culture change in the way student success and retention are being approached and the Enrollment Management Team hopes that the 3.7% retention increase from ‘05-‘06 is not a one time event.

Suggestions:

1. If not already in development, begin to formulate a long-term plan for scholarship endowment and subsequent distribution.
2. Continue plans with architectural firm to design and create an appropriate student center for the campus. It is important that this long overdue structure be given a high priority in the strategic planning process.

3. Continue mentoring efforts such as “Up ‘Till Midnight” and the creation of a 311 information system.

Standard Nine: Student Support Services

York College meets Standard Nine.

Summary of Evidence and Findings:

The institution provides student support services reasonable necessary to enable each student to achieve the institution’s goals for students.

The support of students toward their educational goals is thoughtfully achieved through services offered through dedicated staff, new leadership and enviable collaboration between divisions as well as broad-based institutional commitment. Services are reflective of the type of students that York has: academic support through the Academic Achievement Center, SEEK and YES programs and the Writing Center, advising assistance through the Academic Advising Center, Counseling Office and the Orientation process, and broadly based career development assistance. The Men’s and Women’s Centers as well as the Counseling Center and others offer emotional support to students. More importantly, the College is making a valiant effort in offering services when students need and want them: day, evening, and weekends. The team commends the College for having students as its central focus. Individual attention and nurturing seem to be the norm. According to students, York College is “a home away from home.” It is a place where “I am nurtured” and “know everybody” and where “they push you to grow.”

Recommendation:

The programs and individuals offering student support services are stellar. In light of this quality, it is time to pause to consider and study the structure and umbrella of the Division of Student Development. Currently there are some services that, while they may not duplicate, do overlap or have potential to cause confusion for users. One such area is the advising process in which the counselors are responsible for advising freshmen, while a variety of academic and support service departments advise sophomores, juniors and seniors. A clear distinction, informed by student development theory, among personal counseling, mentoring and academic advising may help begin this process.

Suggestions:

As the College continues to grow or attract a different type of student it will behoove this division to continually assess their support services and remain as flexible

and creative as they have been in the past few years, to adapting to this new and different demographic. The Child Care Center will hopefully be able to open very soon. This new and additional support to York students is critical especially in light of the high percentage of women students.

Standard Ten: Faculty

York College meets Standard Ten.

Summary of Evidence and Findings:

In a climate of hope and change, the faculty genuinely is pleased with the College's current circumstances and future prospects. For the first time in its history, The College is being funded at the levels that the comparable established senior institutions have been funded; and many programs such as the Honors Program have for the first time in their existence the funding to run the program. A new respect and pride is palpable on campus and off. Although the workload for faculty has increased as a result of the changes, faculty members cheerfully perform their many academic tasks and performing their many service activities within and outside the College.

The York Vision states that the College

“is committed to academic excellence through teaching and learning, research, and scholarship. It envisions service to a student body that reflects the unparalleled cultural diversity and richness of Queens and the New York metropolitan area, and to the communities in which they live. It seeks to develop habits of inquiry and communication that promote these ideas of intellectual and personal growth by embodying them in human relations within the College.”

The York College Mission Statement also alludes to the College's commitment to being a “student friendly” institution that is responsive to the special needs of its urban constituency. The faculty, encouraged to pursue professional growth and to serve as a resource to the surrounding community, are principally responsible for carrying out the College's *raison d'être* – educating. They are further responsible for all aspects of the curriculum. In recent years, faculty have been developing an interdisciplinary curriculum at the College, through courses in cultural diversity, humanities, liberal studies, women's studies, Puerto Rican studies, world literatures, social sciences and biotechnology as well as occupational therapy and gerontology and programs in communications technology and in aviation management. **However, the most impressive characteristic of the York College faculty appears to be that they cherish their roles as “mentors” to their students**, obviously taking this role seriously as demonstrated by their remarkable dedication to their students' success.

York College recruits highly qualified faculty and other professionals, who are accountable to the institution, who support the College's programs, and who assure the

continuity and coherence of those programs. The hiring process begins with a department chair's making a request either to fill a line that has become vacant because a faculty member has retired or because of a need as identified in the department's planning document. These requests are made to the Provost for recommendation to the President. The President may then allocate other programmatic lines to a department based on the College's priorities and available resources. The President also allocates, as deemed appropriate, faculty lines to departments to support The City University of New York's (CUNY's) initiatives.

The College has a long-standing commitment to non-discriminatory hiring practices and should be **commended** for the thoroughness of its existing search process: searches are nationally advertised and finalists are brought to campus to deliver sample lectures or to teach demonstration classes and to participate in interviews conducted with search committees, department chairs, the relevant academic dean, the Provost, and the President. Finalists are interviewed by the president, the provost and the department chair. Discussion persists until consensus is achieved.

With searches for thirty-six (36) new positions underway at the time of the Middle States Team Reaccreditation Visit in early March, the perennial issue of the need to hire more full-time teachers so that the College will not need to rely so heavily upon part-time faculty remains. Recruitment of large numbers of new faculty has begun to reverse this trend, but much more still needs to be done. One significant result of the increase in the size of the faculty involves the limited space available for offices since the majority of faculty currently share offices already. A related issue is the need for smart classrooms and instructional computer laboratories to attract this generation of computer savvy faculty. These issues are further exacerbated by the limited number of Information Technology staff, who as dedicated and accomplished as they are, nevertheless, remain too few to meet the demands of the current not to mention expanding future number of faculty at the College. On the positive side, York College should be **commended** for mentoring part-time faculty and encouraging them to participate as much as their time permits in departmental affairs. In addition, York College awards the Certificate of Continuous Employment (the equivalent of tenure) to faculty holding the rank of lecturer and extends health benefits to part-time faculty.

Retention of faculty appears to be an important priority of the College. Candidates for promotion or reappointment demonstrate excellence in teaching, scholarship, and service through their personnel file and their professional portfolio, which contains University required documents (Memorandum of Evaluation, curriculum vitae, publications) and a portfolio prepared by the candidate that includes a framing statement, a reflective statement expressing the candidate's philosophy of teaching, work samples and commentaries that highlight some aspects of the individual's work, and an expanded curriculum vitae, all prepared under the guidance of the departmental Personnel and Budget Committee and the department chair with input from the College Personnel and Budget Committee.

As a result of collective bargaining agreements, untenured faculty holding professorial rank, with the exceptions of librarians and counselors, are now eligible for reassigned time not to exceed a total of 12 hours of the first three years of their contract or 24 of their first five years (depending upon the date of their appointment) “in order to engage themselves in scholarly and/or creative activities related to their academic disciplines.” Providing tenure-track faculty with reassigned time enables them to have the opportunity to develop a record of scholarly achievement as they face the rigors of life as a University professor and should be **commended**; however, one consequence of this generous act is that tenured junior and senior faculty have to pick up the service obligations of their untenured colleagues, resulting in their having an understandable desire for the chance to get comparable reassignment time to pursue their own research interests. Faculty at York College does have an active Office of Sponsored Research that regularly posts announcements of opportunities to apply for research grants, as well as information about workshop grants. Further, the staff supports the individual faculty member throughout the grant application process. Please note that faculty are expected to perform their departmental and college service even when they are getting reassigned time, so this should not be a burden on other members to the department.

York College appears to possess all of the attributes consistent with Middle States Guidelines as an accredited Institution.

Commendations:

1. York College should be **commended** for its genuine “student friendly” environment and for its faculty’s commitment to nurturing and mentoring students. It is clear to the outsider that York students respect and appreciate their instructors and that York instructors have a special affection and dedication to their students. This mutual admiration is a characteristic of York generally only found in colleges and universities with special missions, such as women’s colleges and HBCUs.
2. York College should be **commended** for the thoroughness of its existing search process.
3. York College should be **commended** for mentoring part-time faculty and encouraging them to participate as much as their time permits in departmental affairs.
4. York College should be **commended** for providing tenure-track faculty with reassigned time to enable them to have the opportunity to develop a record of scholarly achievement as they begin to face the rigors of life as a University professor.
5. The faculty of York College should be **commended** for the collegial manner in which they work with the President and their administration in building a cohesive and forward thinking college. There is something very special going on at this institution and that those special qualities and relationships need to be held in the highest regard and celebrated.

Recommendation:

1. York College should continue to work toward increasing the number of full-time faculty and to reduce the College's dependence on part-time faculty.
2. York College should strive to improve the physical environment of the facilities to foster collegiality and to help create a sense of intellectual community as a means of recruiting and retaining new faculty. Special consideration should be given to the matter of the lack of office space and of the need to share office space.

Suggestions:

1. York College should strive to increase the reassigned time available to junior and senior faculty who do not have the contractual advantages of reassigned time of more recent hires.
2. The administration of York College should strive to consider ways to lessen the ever increasing workload of faculty, especially regarding service obligations.
3. York College should strive to construct dedicated smart classrooms and instructional computer laboratories as well as to increase the number of support personnel in the Information Technology area in order better to meet the needs of the increasingly technologically savvy faculty of the College.

Standard Eleven: Educational Offerings

York College meets Standard Eleven.

Summary of Evidence and Findings:

York has several programs that have achieved national accreditation. These programs, including teacher education and social work, are built on an educational program strongly rooted in humanities and the sciences, social and physical. Meetings with the faculty reflected an ability and history of collaboration in the design of courses and sequencing of the same.

Procedures exist to insure that curriculum development has sufficient rigor and coherence. Program changes make use of a format adapted by CUNY. This process includes adherence to a structure that includes sign off by several York committees and appropriate University officials.

The library holdings seem adequate for the educational offerings. Its location represents a real asset for the students and is well used! The College has developed what

appear to be an appropriate group of certified programs that take advantage of its strengths. This service to both students and the local community is indicative of the College's urban mission.

York is undergoing many changes as it finds its niche in CUNY, under the guidance of the President and new Chief Academic Officer, in the fine-tuning needed with regards to mission, course syllabus and related objective and outcome that can be achieved. In addition, the new faculty hires will afford the College greater depth and breadth in several areas including its new journalism major.

The York curriculum clearly is one that reflects the engagement of a dedicated and knowledgeable faculty. The curriculum seems to address the mission of the College and simultaneously is responsive to local community needs. The College is building on the momentum created by a vibrant administration that offers a sense of stability. The team concurs with the Self Study recommendations but suggests that the college move slowly on growing more master's degree programs. We would encourage the College to proceed carefully in creating new programs so as to not out pace existing resources.

Suggestions:

The College should expand training for both faculty and students in new educational technology.

Standard Twelve: General Education

York College meets Standard Twelve.

Summary of Evidence and Findings:

York College has designed its curricula so that students acquire and demonstrate college-level proficiency in general education and essential skills, including oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, and technological competency. The College is now in the process, however, of re-examining the goals and objectives of this curriculum so that they align more closely with the mission of the College.

In the spring of 2004, a General Education Program Review Committee was established. This committee developed a general education mission statement, which was submitted to and approved by the College Senate in December 2006.

In addition, the committee defined fourteen learning objectives, then collected and analyzed syllabi from general education courses to see which learning objectives are addressed by which courses. The committee found this task difficult to complete because many syllabi did not articulate learning objectives in a clear and consistent way.

A new committee has now been charged to continue work on general education. At the same time, the Outcomes Assessment Committee has examined York's general education objectives in relation to standards written by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) and found that several standards are not being addressed by York's general education mission and goals, including teamwork skills, intercultural competence, ethics and values, and applied knowledge. The question thus arises of whether these standards need to be incorporated into the York mission and goals for general education. In addition, a Self-Study survey of department chairs in Fall 2006 found that learning objectives among multiple sections of the same course in many instances differed, and therefore did not even profess to seek the same learning outcomes.

Suggestion:

The College should seek to reach consensus upon the goals and objectives of general education, making use of and building upon the efforts of various committees noted above.

In spite of the issues noted above, the College has enthusiastically addressed the matter of uniformity and relevance of general education in the outcomes of the learning experiences as outlined and required by various academic programs.

Standard Thirteen: Related Educational Activities

York College meets Standard Thirteen.

Summary of Evidence and Findings:

York seems to have paid close attention to its mission and its focus on the urban constituents. The urban constituency is reflected in the variety of certificate programs that seem to cater to the needs of the area. The certificate in child and youth work, for example, includes courses that can be transferred to the College's Teacher Education Program. Several other certificate programs have close ties to York's effort to serve local interests.

In addition to its certificate programs, the College has taken pains to recognize student achievement by means of several national honors societies. These programs including York's Honors Programs go a long way to improving the College's image and creating strong internal esprit de corps.

Suggestion:

1. The College should be careful so as to not over extend itself as it takes on new initiatives. While it wants to revise academic master plan and create more master's degree programs, it should weigh carefully this effort.
2. The team encourages and supports the College's suggestion that it expand training for both faculty and students in new educational technology.

Standard Fourteen: Assessment of Student Learning

York College meets Standard Fourteen.

Summary of Evidence and Findings:

York College clearly recognizes the need for improved learning assessment practices. Although an Assessment Plan has recently been developed, both the Self-Study and Assessment Plan acknowledge a need for a more coordinated, institution-wide learning assessment process.

As written, the Assessment Plan addresses intended efforts pertinent to both Institutional Assessment (Standard 7) and Assessment of Student Learning (Standard 14). However, plans for the assessment of student learning outcomes and overall institutional assessment could be more clearly distinguishable within the Assessment Plan. Moreover, the Assessment Plan could be more detailed, particularly with regard to articulating a conceptual framework, clarifying definitions and roles, providing implementation timelines, and identifying processes for sharing assessment results with stakeholders. The Assessment Plan primarily promotes the use of assessment tools that measure institutional effectiveness rather than assessment of actual student learning. These tools provide limited baseline for demonstrating actual student learning or achievement and the limitations of such tools as measures of student learning are not recognized. The most reliable assessment of actual student learning noted in the Assessment Plan appears to be the CUNY Proficiency Exam completed at the junior level.

While the Assessment Plan provides some preliminary planning pertinent to the assessment of written communication, critical thinking, and quantitative literacy, it does not address plans or timelines for the assessment of technological competence, scientific literacy, information literacy, or oral communication. In addition, the Assessment Plan does not sufficiently address the regular and habitual use of assessment results to improve learning and teaching appropriate to each discipline.

There are concerns for the lack of well-developed student learning outcomes or measurable learning objectives within course syllabi. For effective implementation of a systematic learning assessment process, the College should review curriculum approval processes to ensure the incorporation of well-developed learning objectives (i.e., outcomes) within all courses prior to approval. In addition, York College should undertake a full-scale review of existing courses which would involve: 1) revising

courses to better articulate specific learning expectations, 2) ensuring consistency of learning expectations across multiple sections of a given course, 3) instituting a standardized syllabi template for all courses (old and new), and 4) aligning learning outcomes with the core skills to be attained by York graduates.

A schedule for Academic Program Reviews has not been adhered to and there is a lack of available Academic Program Reviews representing existing York programs. A new schedule for submission of Academic Program Reviews has been developed, but the schedule has not been implemented as of the date of the site visit. Importantly, the process and expectations for Academic Program Review does not appear to articulate a requirement to incorporate student learning assessment data (and use of such) into the analysis of program effectiveness.

There seems to be a disconnect between the roles of the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment and The Outcomes Assessment Committee with regard to responsibility for planning, leading, and implementing institutional assessment activities. This disconnect, when corrected, will help establish a truly institution-wide and comprehensive institutional assessment process.

Commendations:

1. The College should be commended for recent efforts to establish a preliminary vision for learning assessment at York College.
2. Programs, which have been subject to professional accreditations, are commended for having a sampling of focused learning assessment efforts in place. These assessment activities are successful to the extent that professional accreditation has been granted or renewed and such programs may be able to serve as institutional models for aligning curriculum with effective student learning outcomes.
3. The College is to be commended for devoting its Title III efforts to developing learning assessment activities, suggesting a commitment to strengthen assessment practices at York College.
4. The document “Organization Change Through Strategic Planning” (2/14/06) provides valuable direction and guidance for conceptualizing the framework and strategic planning that is imperative for advancing the forthcoming institutional assessment and student learning assessment at York College.

Recommendations:

1. A thorough and comprehensive review of all course syllabi (new and old) should be conducted to ensure that measurable student learning outcomes (i.e., objectives) are stated within all syllabi and that such outcomes are consistent across all sections of a given course. The adoption of a standardized syllabi

format is strongly encouraged and the transference of all courses (new and old) to such a standardized format should occur by the end of the next (2008-2009) academic year. Once the revision process has concluded, course content should be closely monitored to ensure long-term adherence to approved learning outcomes.

2. A comprehensive review/revision of the Assessment Plan should be immediately undertaken in light of the noted gaps acknowledged within the Assessment Plan, within Self-Study, and via observation of the visiting team. Preferably, the process for review/revision of the Assessment Plan and resulting implementation should be led by the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment to ensure continuity with ongoing data gathering processes and the coordination of assessment currently supported by the Title III project. The revised Assessment Plan should, at minimum, include the following critical components:
 - a) Provide a long-range vision, founded on a well-developed and sound conceptual framework, for institutionalizing institutional assessment and learning assessment practices across all college units;
 - b) Clearly distinguish between the envisioned activities and planned initiatives for assessing both institutional effectiveness and student learning;
 - c) Provide detailed and realistic timelines for ensuring (at minimum) assessment of each core competency mandated by Standard #12;
 - d) Specify reporting and dissemination strategies that ensure generated data are widely shared and utilized for institutional decision-making and curricular reform;
 - e) Establish goals and benchmarks for determining long-term success and achievement with regard to improved student learning; and
 - f) Incorporate a process for continuous monitoring and evolution of the Assessment Plan based upon ongoing assessment results and lessons learned.

The revised Assessment Plan (comprised of the aforementioned components) should be fully developed and ready for implementation by the end of the next (2008-2009) academic year.

Suggestions:

1. York College should adhere to the revised Academic Program Review schedule. Moreover, the Academic Program Review process should require documentation

of demonstrated use of learning assessment results to facilitate programmatic and curricular change.

2. The role of the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment could be strengthened with regard to implementation of assessment initiatives and activities. Consideration could be given to greater involvement in all assessment activities (both institutional assessment and student learning assessment) by the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment in order to best develop a true systematic and centralized assessment system. Subsequently, while the Outcomes Assessment Committee has been influential in bringing preliminary plans for assessment to the forefront, the Outcomes Assessment Committee could begin to serve as a steering committee whereby the group can be used by the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment for the purpose of disciplinary expertise, tool development/selection, and dissemination of information to faculty and internal stakeholders.
3. Given the critical component of strategic planning in developing a comprehensive and institution-wide assessment process, the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment could assume some contributory role on the President's Cabinet to better ensure that institutional planning and decision-making are data-driven and based on solid, reliable evidence of institutional performance and student learning results.

Conclusion:

The team was very impressed with the transformation taking place at York College. It is a college whose mission is reflective of its urban surroundings. It is also a College, which has weathered the storm of numerous changes in its executive leadership.

Now York College has a president in the person of Marcia Keizs who has instilled hope and built a management team that believes in her and York College. The College serves a very diverse group of students who now believe the College has become a place to be.

While space is a challenge, the Keizs administration has created niche corners that serve a variety of student needs and interests. With the relationship strengthened with CUNY centrally, the York campus is showing signs of increasing its student growth and developing a closer relationship with the community with its certificate programs that has ties to its curriculum.

It is clear that the central administration has confidence in the College's progress and its leadership. The central administration, by permitting York to tolerate without penalty, a slight drop in its enrollment when new standards were imposed, is one example of its confidence in President Keizs and her administration. York College is truly "on the move".