

Introduction

Johnson State College (JSC) has an important mission to fulfill in serving the region as a critical point of access for Vermont residents; there is a great deal of passion for the work and deep concern regarding the experience of the JSC Students. We found that to a person, the student is at the heart of the college and that the faculty and staff are committed to doing all that they can to ensure student success.

We found that the campus was well aware of the importance of the visit. The Visiting Team received full assistance and cooperation and the campus responded to changes along the way. In addition to the self-study, the team toured buildings and grounds, reviewed a full range of supporting documentation, met with students, faculty, staff, administrators, trustees, as well as the Chancellor.

While there is always room to do better, at a small campus like JSC, there are great opportunities to work closely with one another, to support each other, to have rich discussions and respectful disagreements. Small institutions are uniquely positioned to celebrate success and address small problems before they become big.

However, at small institutions, there is a tendency to rely on one individual, one person, to do things – or to serve as the institutional memory, when in fact, many practices need to be better codified and more widely understood – so that everyone understands how things work and how to get things done. It is critically important to measure how JSC is doing; to collect and analyze data and use it to inform decision making and planning.

The visiting team was impressed by all the campus is doing with very little in the way of financial support from the state. Beyond the classroom experience, the level of care and pride obvious throughout the physical plant is to be admired – it is a statement about how members of the campus community feel about their work and the institution.

As noted, we met with members of the Board of Trustees – who appear to understand and support the important role that JSC plays in providing educational access. They think the students are terrific, that the faculty and staff work hard, and the senior administrators have brought new energy and ideas to the college.

The Chancellor, despite recent, system-wide tensions, also cares about the work of the college, the students and wants the system and all of its institutions to be stronger, better funded and have increased autonomy to innovate – which is critical when resources are not plentiful.

The campus itself is surrounded by beauty in a natural setting that is attractive to students, faculty and staff – it is a real gem. It is the hope that the input of the visiting team will help JSC put a polish on it.

JSC has made progress in several areas identified during its last accreditation cycle, particularly in the adequacy of its library. The observations of the visiting team along with strengths, concerns and suggestions have been detailed by standard. At the end of this report, there is a list of recommendations that the team feels are in the interest of JSC to pursue with the great spirit of energy and creativity that has been a hallmark of its success to date.

Standard One: Mission and Purpose

The Johnson State College community believes in the power of higher education to transform lives. We express this commitment through an education that crosses academic and other boundaries, wherever possible; creates opportunities for students to extend their classroom learning to the field, the laboratory, the studio, the community, and the local and wider world; recognizes the diverse starting points and goals of students; and sustains active participation, high standards, vigorous debate, and mutual respect.

The Johnson State College (JSC) mission of access is critically important to the state of Vermont and to the region it serves. JSC continues to serve first generation students; many of whom are working multiple jobs to get – and stay ahead. Increasingly our society and our economy demands an educated, well prepared population, JSC plays a key role in fulfilling that demand. Across the campus we found a great deal of passion and commitment to the student experience and to the goal of preparing students to be successful during their time at JSC, and beyond. However, as a small, rural institution in a State with a declining, college-age population and limited public investment, JSC will need to draw upon every ounce of passion and commitment as it continues to identify strategic opportunities that will help draw students from beyond its immediate region as well as the state boundaries.

Strengths:

- The College is deeply committed to doing all it can to ensure student success, it was clear in our conversations with students that they understand and believe that they are the institution's first priority.
- JSC is working hard to develop interdisciplinary approaches to student and faculty learning and engagement – the first year seminar experience is an important step and must be continued.
- A clear strength of JSC is that it provides a critical point of access, opening doors to many students who might not otherwise pursue higher education.
- In its mission, JSC expresses a concern for diversity – the dialogues on diversity series is one way to keep this important issue in front of the campus community. We encourage JSC to continue to support diversity as an important institutional value through its curriculum, guest lectures, first year experiences, and through outreach and recruitment strategies of faculty, students and staff alike.

Concerns:

- While open access is an important part of the mission, JSC must continue to actively pursue strategies to retain students. Retention is an issue that must be tackled by faculty and staff alike.

- JSC's access mission is clear – what is not quite as clear, yet is what will be those programs of distinction that help it attract and retain students from outside of the region. Demographic and financial trends indicate that the college must develop recruitment and retention strategies that reach beyond state lines.
- While actively engaged in planning – we found that JSC must now take steps to establish priorities and continue to broaden participation and engagement in the process. These will be important conversations that will test a core component of mission: active participation, high standards, vigorous debate and mutual respect

Suggestion:

The visiting team urges JSC to continue with strategic planning efforts that will identify key programs to help distinguish the college, while supporting its long held mission of access.

Standard Two: Planning and Evaluation

Planning at Johnson State College takes place at each major level of the organization: executive, divisional, and departmental. These activities take many forms, both formal and informal, and within many contexts. For instance, planning can range from a college-wide project considering a broad scope of impact to the way in which a particular area of the College conducts its daily business – for example: a plan to improve registration services.

While planning activities at the College are not prescribed by the Office of the Chancellor, planning does occur in the context of system-wide, Board of Trustees-informed priorities. Several longstanding inter-college bodies (the Council of Presidents, the Academic Deans Council, the Business Affairs Council, the IT Council, and the Library Council) function across the system, providing a framework for initiatives common to the five colleges. While system-wide planning clearly defines the context and parameters in which the member institutions must operate JSC, like each of the individual colleges, is charged with developing its own internal strategic plan and is given significant latitude by the Board of Trustees and Office of the Chancellor in setting priorities, identifying its unique characteristics and distinctions, and defining its own mission.

The College's strategic planning activities – take place under the leadership of the president and academic dean. The most recent efforts began in Fall, 2002 with *Design for our Future, JSC College Plan 2003-2006*. Through this effort the college has begun to identify goals that will support JSC's progress toward the achievement of its mission, while clarifying the distinctive characteristics of the College. Committees of administrative staff and faculty have worked together to begin to identify institutional issues and develop recommendations directed to advancing the College's goals. Some initiatives have a more divisional jurisdiction, especially in Student Services.

Strengths:

- *Design for Our Future 2003 – 2006*, is regarded by the College as its emergent strategic plan. It identifies a series of critically important goals and objectives that require active attention in the next steps of planning. Under 11 general headings, the plan identifies a range of activities including, “Schedule learning and co-curricular activities seven days a week” to “Reduce the number of academic programs in order to allocate resources more effectively,” to “Forge better linkages with public and private entities in order to create more internships for JSC students.” Completion of the document is a signal achievement, reflective of the wisdom and work of multiple broad-based administration/faculty committees. The document is mission-drive and it addresses the issues confronting the College.
- A follow-up document, “Johnson State College Strategic Planning Objectives,” written in 2004, should also be commended. It begins to narrow the focus and has identified initiatives that deserve early attention. It assigns administrative leadership for those initiatives and establishes a Steering Committee composed primarily of senior administrators to move these items forward.
- A second significant planning effort relates to student learning outcomes. JSC has made substantial, early strides in the direction of outcomes assessment. Each academic program has identified its primary student learning outcomes and has placed them in the college catalogue. A few faculty, most notably in Education, have begun to incorporate or embed program outcomes in their respective course syllabi.
- It is also a strength that all of the major planning constituents of the College, including senior leadership from all divisions, department chairs and faculty, acknowledge that planning and evaluation are not yet quite systematic, or systemic, and that further efforts must address the needs for interrelated planning and evaluation efforts.

Concerns:

- The JSC strategic plan identifies important goals and objectives, however, priorities within the plan must be clearly established, implementation steps addressed and resources to support priorities identified. Clarity about who is responsible for carrying out plans would be helpful, as would be measurements of success and timelines for completion. In doing so, greater, more deliberate faculty input should be sought, fostering a greater sense of faculty ownership in both the planning and implementation process.
- Likewise the establishment of academic program outcomes is an early and encouraging step in an institutional planning process that results in a comprehensive assessment plan. While an important accomplishment, as it stands the outcomes placed in the catalog are uneven among departments and some do

not easily lend themselves to effective measurement. Thus far most syllabi contain no learning outcomes.

- The visiting team was concerned to find that no one person at the College has formal responsibility to establish assessment procedures, including faculty development regarding assessment, analyzing outcomes, or for recommending how assessment findings might be incorporated into curricular development and budgetary priorities. There is no institutional research capability available for collecting and tabulating assessment data.

Suggestions:

1) JSC should move deliberately to enact its strategic vision. The Steering Committee might well be reinvigorated with greater faculty – and perhaps student – input, and charged with completion of a working document. We found that the following would be useful to this process:

- Priority rankings of initiatives that align with the College’s mission;
- Specific steps and timelines toward implementing each ranked initiative;
- Identification of resources needed to attain and maintain each initiative;
- Determination of individuals and/or offices responsible for moving each initiative to completion;
- An evaluation process to determine how each initiative enhances the institutional mission and whether the item is cost effective. Resources, responsibilities and timelines for this evaluation;
- A process to review the priorities based on evaluation;
- Next steps to make this entire process cyclical.

2) A comprehensive assessment plan is of critical importance. It is recommended that JSC embark on such a plan as soon as possible. A comprehensive plan, cyclical in nature, might well encompass administrative units as well as academic programs. For the academic side of the house, the plan might be coordinated with the system-based mandatory academic program review process (VSC 101). This assessment plan would cascade from program to course-based outcomes, drawing every member of the faculty into the improvement of student learning. Administrative units, as with academic ones, would decide the outcomes appropriate to the unit, select instruments for measuring effectiveness, carry out the assessment and use the findings to improve performance.

3) It is suggested that as a distinct, but nonetheless coordinated, part of the institutional planning process a systematic academic master plan be developed. This plan can be considered the analog to the facilities master plan and should have broad faculty engagement. Such a plan might:

- identify current programs that may grow, shrink or perhaps be eliminated as well as new programs to be added to the curriculum, with time-frames and reasons related to the academic mission of the College;

- specify implementation steps, clarify decision making process, and identify resources to support implementation; and
- determine a method of evaluating the validity of the plan

4) The campus would benefit from an Enrollment Management Plan, It is suggested that Student Services coordinate its various planning efforts into a comprehensive enrollment plan – one that connects student recruitment and the admissions pool to academic initiatives, campus retention efforts and the external employment climate. Admissions personnel should engage department and program chairs for assistance with both marketing and retention.

5) The College consider a grass-roots budget process by which each local academic and administrative unit would make requests for operating expenses, personnel positions, equipment, development and training, and other categories of funding. Requests would be based on academic or administrative need, supported by data, and related to the strategic plan, enrollment management plan, academic master plan or the comprehensive assessment plan. Given limited financial resources, and the tendency to roll-over budgets, an alternative would be for each unit to develop a short “critical needs” list using the same criteria.

6) JSC leadership is keenly aware and supportive of using data to inform the planning process. The visiting team, while mindful of the resource demands, suggests that for the College to accomplish effectively its ambitious and important plans, that a person be identified with responsibility and support for institutional research.

Standard Three: Organization and Governance

As a member of the Vermont State Colleges, JSC shares a Board of Trustees (BOT) with its four sister state colleges. Together, the five colleges comprise the Vermont State Colleges (VSC) system. The Board of Trustees is made up of fifteen members, including one student member, nine members appointed by the Governor, and four legislative trustees. The Governor also serves as a trustee and the Chancellor of the VSC is an ex officio, non-voting member. By statute, the BOT holds eight meetings a year; a summer meeting serves as the annual meeting and board retreat. The Board limits its direct action to the development and oversight of policy and finances and to hiring and evaluating of its executive officers. The Board does not directly manage the institutions. They are a diverse and highly engaged group of individuals who work to support and promote the System as a whole, as well as the individual colleges.

The Chancellor of the system reports to the Board of Trustees, and the JSC President reports directly to the Chancellor. The Chancellor holds regularly scheduled meetings with the Council of Presidents. In addition to the five presidents, the system’s three vice presidents, whose areas of responsibility are academic planning, employee relations/ legal counsel, and finances, complete the membership of the Council of Presidents.

The president of JSC, as required, attends all board committee and full trustee meetings to represent the College. Committees of the board include the priorities committee; audit committee; the education, personnel, and student life committee; and the facilities and finance committee.

We found that JSC has a system of governance that supports the attainment of its mission and purposes. Its organization creates, sustains, and encourages teaching, learning, scholarship, and appropriate research. There is a clear division of responsibility and authority between the system office and the institution, as well as the various constituent groups within the college. Both faculty and students have functioning governance bodies with by-laws that clearly define their roles and responsibilities. The faculty's by-laws for their assembly spells-out their function in assuring academic integrity.

In addition to the existing Staff Federal, the professional and technical workers recently were organized via collective bargaining agreements. Evidence supports the fact that these groups meet locally.

Strengths:

- The President and administration of JSC are energetic and talented and are working hard to lead the school onto a path that will prepare it well for the challenges and opportunities ahead.
- President Murphy has recently introduced two new councils to the JSC governance structure - a President's Council and College Council both of which are advisory. The President's Council is composed of senior and junior administration and is an extension of the President's Cabinet (the president and the four deans), which already existed. College Council is a broad-based advisory group reaching out to functional areas and all constituents within JSC. Any member of this council may submit agenda items for discussion, and as appropriate referral or action.
- JSC has a highly successful adult/distance education program. The External Degree Program (EDP) has co-directors who report directly to the Dean of Academic Affairs. There are five (completion) degrees that make-up the offerings of the EDP, which are programs available on campus and overseen by the appropriate academic units. A recent articulation agreement between JSC and the state's community colleges has delineated responsibilities addressing advising and student support to the benefit of distance students in this program. While the degree is identified as an external program, once enrolled, students matriculate into a completion degree on campus.

Concerns:

- The College is leanly staffed. One impact of this is that the Dean of Academic Affairs appears to have a very high number of direct reports – we raise this for the President’s consideration as a different pattern may enable the Dean’s considerable talents and energies to be better focused on the important work ahead. We found that a large percentage of the administration is new to the college; the President is the most senior member of the administration with five years of service.
- While we heard concerns – from members of the faculty - regarding their role in governance, we believe that concerns expressed, more appropriately, reflect a need for more deliberate communication strategies. We found that there is a spirit of openness and a willingness to engage in discussion and problem solving across the campus. This quality is going to be essential as the College moves forward.

Suggestions:

- 1) The President and Dean of Academic Affairs work with the Faculty Assembly in a more deliberate fashion – perhaps attend Assembly meetings on a more regular basis. We encourage the faculty to invite and welcome administrators to their meetings.
- 2) Steps should be taken to strengthen communications across the campus – even in small institutions communication has to be ongoing and deliberate. When appropriate, governance bodies are a good starting point denoting a level of respect, trust, and importance to the organizations and ideally improve participation rates by the constituents.

Standard Four: Programs and Instruction

Undergraduate Programs

JSC curriculum, with twenty eight degree programs, befits a much larger institution. Several program initiatives have contributed to an enhancement of the breadth of offerings available at JSC. These include:

- First Year Experience courses being piloted during 2005 – 2006
- Extended Classroom Experiences
- The External Degree Program
- General Education Reform

Strengths:

- The variety and versatility of JSC’s degree programs is a considerable strength. Most popular majors [English, History, Psychology, Education] offer enough

standard courses to compete with those of larger institutions. Within programs, small cadres of full-time faculty have expanded their academic specializations and have developed multiple fields of study. This attention to the breadth of offerings has created a rich tapestry of course offerings that appear to be rigorous and sophisticated.

- Recent initiatives have been valuable in enhancing the academic program of the College. The new *First Year Experience* courses – interdisciplinary in nature, are intended to prove attractive to beginning students. Being piloted during the 2005 – 2006 academic year, they are intended to introduce students to the excitement of college-level thinking (and perhaps improve retention as well).
- Extended classroom experiences are a hallmark of the JSC program. Engagement of students beyond the classroom connects academic study to the “real world” outside the College. The External Degree Program offers opportunities to adult students with at least 60 academic credits to complete a course of study, through intense academic advisement, at JSC and several sites around Vermont.
- The College has reformed its general education, breaking away from the conventional “turf-based” departmental offerings to a tri-level structure of Fundamental Skills, Disciplinary Explorations, and Interdisciplinary Studies. General Education courses account for 39-40 credits, roughly one-third of a student’s degree.
- Programs in Fine and Performing Arts: Music, Theatre, Dance, Creative Writing, and Studio Arts are consistently cited by administration and faculty as distinguishing JSC from other public liberal arts institutions. The same may be noted for a variety of environmental health programs.

Concerns:

- While a source of strength, the array of offerings has created concerns about programs being stretched so thin that delivery of the curriculum may be problematic. This is the case despite the laudable effort of the College to eliminate several under-enrolled programs over the previous several years. Anecdotal impressions support the view that some students find difficulty in getting courses in timely fashion toward graduation.
- Similarly, it is suggested that a system of planned course rotations, department by department, could alleviate some of the pressure in course delivery. The College has, moreover, stated its awareness of the need for additional early morning and later afternoon hours – and the restoration of Friday class hours – but the issues remain.
- Frequently programs may rely (too) heavily on part-time faculty to deliver the curriculum. While not intrinsically an issue, there have been concerns raised

about the “quality control” of part-timers, since there is no systematic process for evaluating part-time faculty. The very recent negotiated agreement does permit department chairs some evaluative responsibility, but it will remain for departments to manage this matter.

- As with the curricula of many colleges and universities, the undergraduate curriculum of JSC appears to be the product of the expertise and interests of faculty over a period of time. One result is that even in very strong programs there are curricular cavities. It may be suggested that departments reexamine their deployment of courses in light of disciplinary developments. Faculty ownership of curriculum must also include faculty responsibility to maintain currency in relation to the academic mission of the college and to the academic disciplines.
- Another result is a curricular construction that lacks consistent articulation of course levels from program to program. It is suggested that current programs and new initiatives be re-integrated into a curricular identity in which levels [first year experiences, general education, majors, capstones] are well defined and ascend in complexity and sophistication appropriate to each program. Each student would thus receive an articulated program of study.

Suggestions:

- 1) An institutional study regarding student demand for courses related to course availability would provide valuable data for connecting student needs with semester by semester offerings. Findings might be utilized to maximize the deployment of courses over a three or four year period. A review of increased hours and the use of Friday for instruction should also be a part of this study.
- 2) Construction of a process for evaluating part-time faculty is important. Perhaps the negotiated agreement can serve as a springboard, but in any event this matter of “quality control” as well as support and engagement of part-time faculty must be addressed.
- 3) Standard Two suggests that an Academic Master Plan be developed. As part of this process, program faculty may want to consider what academic experiences in their disciplines are the most propitious to a successful major -- and then begin the difficult process of creating the most up-to-date curricula for them. Similarly, the issues of curricular articulation and curricular integration must be addressed.

Graduate Degree Programs

Strengths:

The three master’s level programs, in Education, Counseling, and Fine Arts, demonstrate an appropriate level of complexity and specialization. The Master of Arts in Education has a number of areas of specialization that serve practicing teachers. In addition, the

college offers an initial licensure program targeted to individuals with liberal arts degrees who desire teaching certification.

The Master of Arts in Counseling prepares counselors for the schools, public agencies, and higher education, including preparation for state licensure in Mental Health, School Guidance, or Drugs and Alcohol. The program has an appropriate set of course offerings, including a required practicum and personal growth portfolio. Program enrollments are increasing. Currently, five full-time faculty teach in the program, all holding terminal degrees, and an increasing number of part-time faculty members offer additional courses and clinical supervision.

The Master of Fine Arts in Studio Arts is offered in collaboration with the Vermont Studio Center. The program, targeted to working artists, is organized into 4-week full-time residencies at the Center. The full-time faculty members organize and mentor the artists through the residencies and their subsequent process of packet reviews.

Strengths:

- The growth in demand for the Master's in Education has risen and is likely to continue to increase because it is well-known in the state and a program of choice. The addition of new programs such as the new strand in Autism within the Applied Behavioral Analysis program is evidence that the college is responsive to the needs of the State of Vermont.
- The MFA program offers a benefit to the undergraduate Visual Arts program in two ways. First, the presence of the MFA students allows the undergraduate students to see their more senior colleagues as role models and understand the higher degree of sophistication of their art. Second, exhibiting the MFA students' work allows the campus gallery to bring in fewer exhibits by other professional artists.

Concern:

- All of the graduate programs rely heavily on faculty overloads and adjunct faculty to deliver their curricula. The heavy demands on graduate faculty and the use of adjuncts lead us to question whether the programs' quality can be sustained without additional resources.

Scholarship and Research

JSC is primarily a teaching institution; however, faculty members are expected to participate in research and creative activity as part of their evaluation process for tenure and promotion. Many faculty members are proud of their scholarly and creative work and see it as connecting them to their disciplines. A display of books written by faculty members is prominently displayed in the library.

Strength:

- The college supports faculty scholarship and creative activity through professional development funds, sabbaticals, and additional opportunities for travel. Many of the faculty members express their pleasure at being active in their field and feel that the college resources are certainly adequate, if not lavish, especially considering overall institutional resource constraints.

Instruction

Instruction is one of the great strengths of Johnson State College. Faculty members are enthusiastic teachers, clearly committed to student success. They care deeply about the intellectual development of the first-generation Vermont students and strive to reach out to engage them in intellectual life. The institution clearly values and rewards teaching excellence, calling it the sine qua non of the faculty evaluation process.

In recent years, almost all departments have instituted learning outcomes for majors, and these learning outcomes are gradually working their way into course syllabi. This year, faculty have begun to tackle the job of defining learning outcomes for general education. Faculty members report the tension of “teaching to the middle” because the student body is quite diverse in abilities and preparation. Some faculty argue that students need instruction in basic skills and transition to college, which may be embedded in the freshman seminar program.

Instructional methods include a mix of traditional face-to-face instruction and experiential learning, the latter an approach that both the faculty and the college administration support. There are some opportunities to teach with technology on campus; however, these are limited by the lack of universal access to “smart classrooms.” Increasingly, online courses are offered through the External Degree Program, which serves many place-bound students who could not otherwise travel to campus to obtain college courses.

Concern:

- As noted above, resources are spread thin in the JSC curriculum. Many programs are supported by very few full-time faculty. Although the faculty members in general give a great deal of time and attention to the students, their shortage in numbers limit the students’ exposure to different perspectives and may contribute to burnout among the full-time faculty.

Admissions and Retention

Johnson State College prides itself on providing access to the people of Vermont, including those who are first-generation college students, come from low-income families, and/or lack full preparation for college work. In practical terms, this means that the college turns away only a small fraction of its applicants. With the assistance of a

federal grant, the college instituted the Transitions Program to assist some 235 under-prepared students through advising, tutoring, and other learning assistance. This program is successful in helping those targeted students to persist and graduate from college.

Concern:

- Institutional retention and graduation rates are clearly a problem, with freshman to sophomore retention rates at 61% and the 6-year graduation rate at 34%. The institution has targeted retention as an issue and has taken some steps to increase retention, including improved advising and a pilot first year seminar. However several questions remain. Should there be more “ownership” of the responsibility for retention? Should the institution examine whether its liberal admissions policies indirectly create a “revolving door” through which it loses a large portion of the first year admitted students? How could students in financial need be better assisted and counseled around their financial obligations to allow them to persist and graduate in a timely way? Could a scheduling change to include a greater number of Friday courses assist retention by generating a more vibrant campus life and/or by offering students additional opportunities to enroll in key courses?

Suggestions:

- 1) Several of the academic programs have exhibited growth in recent years, while full-time faculty positions have remained stable or decreased in number, leading to the question of whether such continued trends will erode program quality. A plan for future faculty allocation would help alleviate concern among faculty that resources will continue to dwindle, regardless of program growth.
- 2) The Transitions program seems to have substantial success in reaching and retaining the most severely under-prepared students and students with disabilities. A discussion about how similar services could be extended to the next tier of slightly less at-risk students might be worthwhile.
- 3) The Strategic Plan calls for the better integration of the on-campus and EDP programs. This goal might be facilitated by hiring future full-time faculty who would be able to contribute to both teaching formats.
- 4) The Johnson State campus and programs could perhaps benefit from enhanced marketing and outreach strategies.

Standard Five: Faculty

Faculty in general are well credentialed and experienced. They are committed to teaching and student success inside and outside of the classroom. They typically teach a broad range of courses in their major programs, as well as interdisciplinary and other

courses for service and general education. Students of widely varying preparation and ability appreciate faculty availability and support and would rank quality of the faculty, small classes and close interaction as major reasons for attending JSC. Many full-time faculty have ongoing scholarly work, some of which involves students. Recent grant success in some science areas has provided funding for summer work for faculty and students, as well as for laboratory renovation and equipment purchase.

Part-time faculty taught about 40% of course credit hours in Fall 2002, a percentage up from the 27% in 1995 - as reported in the Self Study. This reliance on part-time faculty raises some concerns. The part-time faculty are large in number; while many of them are well-credentialed and are viewed as serving the institution well, they do not formally advise students and participation in service is voluntary for the most part, leaving these responsibilities primarily to a full-time faculty many of whom feel very busy. Part-time faculty are valued for their special expertise, especially in areas like fine and performing arts, and they also teach a significant proportion of the general education courses. The External Degree Program (EDP), a growing program at JSC, serving an important need in the state, is taught largely by part-time faculty. The part-time faculty are represented by a collective bargaining agreement that states the policies and procedures that apply to part-time faculty.

The visiting team met with some members of the part time faculty who reported feeling relatively invisible. They expressed a desire to be more systematically included in college communications and would appreciate acknowledgement for the contributions they make. Some part-time faculty volunteer in various service capacities and some are made welcome at department meetings, but feel conflicted about wanting greater involvement in the institution, and believing that such involvement warrants special compensation.

Concern continues at some level about too few faculty trying to cover too many courses and programs. While many programs have overlapping requirements, 54 full-time faculty supporting 31 academic degree programs seems a stretch, in addition to staffing related to general education, an interdisciplinary capstone course, and promising initiatives like the first year seminar. Since its five year NEASC review, the college added and filled a new position in outdoor education, and filled vacant positions with new faculty in education, chemistry, health sciences and literature, but has held open recently some vacant positions to provide flexibility. Staffing flexibility in the short-term is a benefit as the college positions itself to respond to changing patterns of enrollment and initiatives emerging from the strategic planning process, but priority should be given to a staffing plan—open to revision as needed—so that there can be a shared understanding of expected use of faculty resources, such as vacant positions and use of part-time faculty.

While the faculty are engaged in the work of the college, participation in key forums like the Faculty Assembly has fluctuated over the years. Given the manageable size of the faculty, regular day-long retreats of the whole faculty could support development of a shared vision for the institution during a time of significant challenge and change. The large number and long service of many part-time faculty, and their importance in serving

both general education and many majors, warrant efforts to integrate them better into the academic mission of the college through a more consistent approach to communication, coordination and appreciation as noted above.

The college has a generally accepted process for recruiting and appointing its faculty once decisions are made about assignment of lines. Current ongoing efforts to discuss priorities for assignment of tenure track lines in particular are taking place in the context of institutional and program needs. In its efforts to recruit a diverse faculty, processes now followed informally should be formalized and progress reviewed on an ongoing basis.

Policies and procedures related to appointment, evaluation, promotion and tenure are well spelled out in the faculty collective bargaining agreements. While recent contracts have been marked by reasonable percentage salary increases, offers of starting salaries in the mid-30's for new assistant professors have made recruitment of new tenure track faculty very difficult or in some cases, reportedly, impossible. Limited opportunities for partners and high housing costs add to the difficulties of recruitment and retention. The quality of recently hired new tenure track faculty seems excellent on the whole, but it is critical to continue to find excellent faculty with a commitment to the life and mission of Johnson State as more senior faculty retire.

There are a variety of resources available for faculty professional development under the collective bargaining agreements, in addition to others provided by the college, like the President's Fund for Excellence in Teaching. The number of sabbaticals available seems to match fairly well the number of faculty requests. There are some faculty development funds for part-time faculty specified in the collective bargaining agreement. Faculty are taking advantage of these opportunities to develop both teaching and research interests.

The long tradition of service learning at JSC is the foundation for the growing sense of importance that experience plays in engaging students in their learning. The "extended classroom experience" is seen as an important and distinguishing feature of the college now and increasingly in the future.

Strengths:

- Full-time and part-time faculty are committed to student academic success and are highly regarded by students. They are well trained for their areas of primary responsibility and passionate about their fields, but also participate in interdisciplinary teaching and the extended classroom experience.
- There is a core of faculty dedicated to participation in governance and planning.
- There is also a core of faculty engaged in scholarly work, with benefits to the intellectual climate of the campus and involved students, consistent with good undergraduate education.

- The institution is doing a good job of bringing new resources (Title III Grant) and an administrative climate supportive of faculty professional development.

Concerns:

- Some faculty have concerns about equitable sharing of workload in areas like governance and planning.
- Entering salaries are relatively low, making recruitment and retention of new faculty a challenge.
- Human resources practices and procedures around recruitment of minority faculty and staff do not seem to be documented.

Suggestions:

- 1) Continue to support and encourage faculty to engage students in research, scholarship and service learning.
- 2) Faculty and administrators must continue efforts to strengthen and communicate their shared sense of institutional identity and effectiveness to meet the challenges ahead.
- 3) Greater emphasis must be placed on the orientation, evaluation and support of part-time faculty, as noted in the self-study.
- 4) Staffing flexibility in the short-term is important as the college positions itself to respond to changing patterns of enrollment and initiatives emerging from the strategic planning process, but priority should be given soon to a staffing plan—open to revision as needed—so that there can be a shared understanding of expected use of faculty resources, such as vacant positions and numbers of part-time faculty.

Standard Six: Student Services

The Student Services Division provides appropriate support services to aid students in their intellectual and personal development. Staff members are student-centered, committed, and well prepared to support the multiple functional areas necessary for the well-being of its student population. Though staffing levels are lean, they provide a solid co-curricular experience for the JSC student body. Student feedback, both in structured and informal interviews praised and appreciated the work of members of the Division, and they find that access to services is relatively easy and resolution of issues are addressed in an appropriate amount of time. There were very few concerns about hours of operation in most functional areas, and students report that staff make every effort to accommodate their needs.

Additional areas of strength noted by students included the range and quantity of social programs during the evening, and increasing number of weekend events. Extracurricular opportunities provided by the SERVE office are exceptional, and students also enjoy the SHAPE center, as well as the expansive intramural recreation offerings.

Students with learning differences are effectively supported by the Academic Support Services Office. Professional tutors are available and the continuance of TRIO grant will enable the department to identify and assist under prepared students for the rigors of college-level work.

Counseling and Health Services provide seamless, high quality services to students. When needed, outside referrals are made in a timely manner. The anticipated addition of a full-time position dedicated to addressing substance abuse issues will greatly round-out the counseling services to the students. However, students did raise concerns about the appearance and functionality of the work space within the Health Services Office.

JSC has four residence halls, housing approximately 525 students, as well as an apartment complex for married students, civil union partners, students with children, and upper-class students. Each residential facility is undergoing varying degrees of renovation. Students report that the bathrooms in certain halls need attention to privacy.

The residence halls are supervised by a combination of professional and paraprofessional staff that works diligently to promote a sense of community. Resident students report a high level of satisfaction with the residence life staff as well as with Public Safety Office in providing a safe living/learning environment. It is important to note, that students and staff indicated that among the reasons that students choose to leave on-campus housing during their junior and senior years is related to cost as well as a desire for independence.

Part of the College's Strategic Plan is an overall concentration on the First-Year Experience. A critical component is New Student/Transfer Orientation. It was hard to discern how Orientation and the new initiatives to be developed under the Title III grant are connected. A continued examination of what students need for support, and skills training, from point of acceptance through the first-year may aid in defining the entirety of the first-year experience learning outcomes. JSC may want to reexamine its timing of Orientation and assess whether or not the current model aids in alleviating the anxiety surrounding this new academic venture. Particular attention should be given to parents to "help them, help their students" with this life transition.

Since its last accreditation visit, JSC has reduced its number of varsity sports from 12 to 10. The program is guided and abides by the philosophy of NCAA standards for Division III athletics. Concerns were expressed about the level of funding for athletics, commitment to recruiting student/athletes, and the turnover of part-time coaches.

The recent merging of the Career Services Office with Academic Advising was also expressed, by some, as an area of concern. Clarity concerning focus and operations of the new department is still needed, and there is some worry that the dual reporting structure could contribute to a lack of direction and focus.

The Division has done a good job in conducting a variety of quantitative and qualitative performance indicators to ascertain the impact of their work, and has made a good faith effort to make adjustments, when needed, to enhance the JSC student's experience.

Strengths

- There is a committed, student-centered, well qualified staff within the Student Services division. Students report positive interactions with members of the student services division, and that staff are concerned with assessing the effectiveness of programs and services, to help guide improvements.
- There is a strong vibrant service learning program, an abundant number of leadership opportunities, a commitment to diversity education, an excellent recreations program, and a staff that is well prepared and sensitive to issues of students with special needs.
- Students report that JSC is a safe community and praised the efforts of the residence life and Public Safety staffs for their work. Standards of behavior are well publicized and seem to be well understood.
- The counseling and health services departments are well-respected and have a strong working relationship.
- EDP students receive appropriate level of support and have access to all services offered to undergraduate day students.

Concerns

- As with other parts of the institution, staffing is lean. Given the demands on staff, it is difficult for them to leave campus and engage in professional development.
- The recent merging of the Academic Advising Office with Career Services requires additional attention to avoid the dilution of one, or both, of the services.
- The physical space in the Health Services Office needs improvement.
- There are some critically important campus-wide initiatives that require clear ownership, leadership and coordination, such as student orientation and the first-year experience plan.
- Typical with small schools, athletics poses some concerns including part-time coaches, resulting in a high degree of staff turnover, which impacts recruitment and retention of student-athletes.

Suggestions:

- 1) Student Services must play an active role, working closely with faculty to develop and implement the first-year initiative. An important component of this might include a vehicle for helping all students and parents understand the “nuts & bolts” of transitioning to college.
- 2) Parents or guardians, while sometimes overly involved in their student’s life, can play a pivotal role in a student’s persistence to graduation. The College needs to explore how parents can be part of the retention solutions.
- 3) Clear direction and focus of what are the key priorities for Academic Advising/Career Services Office is needed as well as clarification in the dual reporting relationship.
- 4) A well-designed Health Services Office space that provides a high degree of privacy and confidentiality for students should be identified as a top priority in the College’s Master Plan.

Standard Seven: Library and Information Technology

Built in 1996, the Library Learning Center is a beautiful building that is welcoming to students, faculty and staff. Reference services are located at the building’s main entrance, making it easy for students to receive assistance, instruction, or support, as needed. The building houses a variety of library collections and instructional technology (IT) resources that support the college curriculum and the intellectual and cultural development of the campus community. The Library Director also serves as the director of IT. In both of these roles he has demonstrated a commitment to securing resources that support programs and services appropriate to the college’s mission. In addition, he was appointed by the Chancellor as the Director of the Vermont State College Libraries Council where he is instrumental setting the systems technology planning agenda and in securing funding for collaborative initiatives.

The Library has an adequate book collection of approximately 120,000 volumes with a growth of 2,300 volumes annually. On campus students seem to enjoy the array of study spaces and computer access throughout the building and generously borrow items from the print collection (over 36,000 transactions annually). Access to over 20 online databases and electronic books (Netlibrary) via the Library web page are available to all members of the campus community. Students in the External Degree Program (EDP) are well served by these electronic resources and by the Librarians and IT staff that provide the remote access, technical support, and research assistance.

Although the Library provides access to a variety of resources, inter-library loan services are also available to all students. Approximately 1500 items are borrowed annually and, in turn, the Library reciprocates by lending almost twice as much to its sister institutions than it borrows. Most of the electronic resources are funded through group purchasing arrangements among the Vermont State College system libraries. Additional database

subscriptions are purchased from the Library's annual materials budget of \$131,500 and an additional \$4,000 stipend from a capital fund. Recent fundraising efforts generated approximately \$200,000 which was used to update the book collection. In addition, the Library is a government documents depository and its offerings are further enhanced by a well used Vermont history collection and a Children's Literature room that contains materials for Education majors.

Reference services are provided 69 hours per week with staff hours adjusted to accommodate evening coverage and assistance for the online population. Research instruction classes are conducted in the Library, upon request by faculty, and often provided in classroom or other settings on campus. IT staff support a fully networked campus and oversee several computing facilities, labs, and technology classrooms. Informational brochures and pamphlets are disseminated throughout the Reference area of the building and the Library web page contains all relevant policies regarding access to resources, borrowing, resource sharing and copyright. The site is regularly reviewed and updated and the Blackboard course management system and portal features are used to communicate library services to students.

Strengths:

- JSC has made improvements in the IT department structure including, filling a desktop support position, implementing the Library's new management system, SIRSI, and enhancing remote access to library resources and services through a proxy server and the campus portal.
- Results from online satisfaction surveys indicate staff in both the Library and IT departments are committed to serving students well. Despite short staffing, Library and IT staff are involved in several initiatives including, efforts to improve service to EDP students, securing wireless access points in key spots across campus, as well as a pilot project to embed information literacy instruction and assessment into courses of all levels.

Concerns:

- Despite a small increase in state funding, the Library's materials budget has essentially remained unchanged over the past 15 years and there is no established mechanism, other than to directly appeal to the President, for additional funds for materials, staff, and computer equipment to accommodate the growing need. With retirements, resignations, and changing needs, maintaining adequate professional and paraprofessional staffing in the Library and IT services is a challenge. Staff in both departments all wear many hats and try their best to accommodate the growing demand for services from on and off-campus students even though some vacant positions remain unfilled.
- IT staff express concern that there are not enough positions to adequately cover all the required services and that funding for work-study student assistants is lean.

Responsibilities on IT staff continue to increase as services are required from a relatively large and growing EDP population and from a campus community that is encouraged to incorporate technology into the classroom. Without the ability to hire additional student assistants and technicians, it will become difficult to maintain the level of service required and expected.

- There is also concern that centralization of IT services across the VSC system may reduce the number of technicians available to respond to campus requests in a timely way. This has been a public relations problem for the local IT staff. In addition, as the Library has migrated to a new operating system, there seems to be limited expertise in VSC systems support to resolve all the bugs in the new system.
- The Library could benefit from the addition of a cataloger, with perhaps some collection development duties, as well as another reference librarian to support EDP students and information literacy initiatives. Some library staff members expressed concern regarding the delivery of information literacy instruction to students and would like to be involved in a more formal program of teaching and assessment preferably embedded in General Education.

Suggestions:

- 1) To fully support the college's goals and play a more active role in supporting student learning outcomes, library and IT staff should be encouraged to engage with faculty members interested in developing pilot projects that explore creative approaches to library instruction and information literacy initiatives, including First Year Seminars. Staff may want to consider "web camps" and workshops to train faculty in the use of technology in the classroom, supplemented by peer mentors and best practices sessions.
- 2) There is a need for greater faculty participation in collection development – including selection and currency of materials, required resources, and medium.
- 3) Technology initiatives could benefit from the addition of a full-time technical position to assist with faculty training and support services. Additional student assistants (work study or otherwise) are also needed to field and respond to troubleshooting requests and assist with the growing need for technical support in the classrooms.

Standard Eight: Physical Resources

The campus of Johnson State College occupies approximately 380 acres – 25 of which make up the main campus – on a beautiful hilltop in the village of Johnson, Vermont, in Vermont's north central area. With the exception of McClelland Hall, completed in 1942, and the Library and Learning Center, completed in 1996, most of the campus was built between 1958 and 1972. The campus includes 14 academic and residential buildings as well as a 50-unit apartment complex. Among these buildings are five

residence halls, two buildings for classroom and faculty office use, the Library and Learning Center – a meeting, library, classroom and office space – a performing arts center, a visual arts center, and an athletic facility. The performing arts and visual arts centers each contain classrooms, as well as performance and studio space, while the athletic facility contains classroom and general recreational space. The campus also includes three athletic fields, a rugby field, extensive walking and Nordic ski trails, a disc golf course, and snowboard hill. Additionally, Johnson State College has a ropes course and two climbing walls. Johnson State College students and faculty also have access to the Babcock Preserve, a 1,000-plus acre nature preserve in nearby Eden, Vermont, owned by the Vermont State Colleges and managed by Johnson State College.

The College's specialized teaching spaces include studios in the Visual Arts Center for sculpture and photography; painting, drawing, and printmaking; ceramics and jewelry making; and an exhibition gallery. The Dibden Center for the Arts provides a 500-seat auditorium with a large proscenium, rehearsal space, backstage and flies; an art gallery with reception space; a MIDI lab and a recording studio; and music practice rooms. The College maintains classroom and lab space in Bentley Hall for the environmental and health science programs, with particular lab spaces dedicated for biology, chemistry, and earth sciences. Bentley also has a rock laboratory, animal laboratory and one technology-enhanced classroom. The SHAPE building provides labs and classrooms primarily for health science programs and its outdoor programs. Moreover, in recent years the College has installed technology enhancements in seven classrooms and in the LLC multi-media auditorium, and created several fine computer labs chiefly in Martinetti Hall, the Library and Learning Center, and McClelland Hall.

The Dewey Campus Center, centrally located, provides offices and facilities for the campus newspaper, the radio station, clubs and student leadership, a snack bar and several informal and light recreation areas. The student health center, managed by the local hospital, is located in Arthur Hall. A counseling center is located in the dedicated space in one of the residence halls' lower levels. With its concentration of the campus dining program, the bookstore, mailroom, and the Base Lodge, a performance space, Stearns Hall is considered to be one of the busiest and most popular buildings on campus. However Stearns' spatial configurations are considered inefficient and it lacks adequate space for complementary student programming. It also has limitations in easy access for the handicapped. The College has high hopes that the Master Plan will recommend an effective way to renovate or expand Stearns Hall so that it can play a more pivotal role in the campus' social life and in accommodating more student organizations.

With most of the principal buildings constructed between 1958 and 1972, there is some asbestos abatement work to be done as other interior renovation work is scheduled. Other deferred maintenance priorities include window replacements, elevator replacements, ADA compliance, code-related upgrades, roadway repairs, and mechanical repairs and energy saving measures in heating and cooling systems. JSC places a priority on projects that require compliance with federal and state laws and has a chemical hygienist on staff responsible for compliance with EPA regulations including the handling, storage and disposal of hazardous materials. JSC has an impressive, cost-effective composting

program for recycling food waste and other organic materials. It also maintains a safety committee to address OSHA and EPA standards as they apply to the safety in the workplace and campus environments.

JSC provides housing for 525 students in the residence halls and another 50 in its apartment complex. Each hall has a distinctive character. Martinetti Hall is a co-educational facility with a high number of single rooms dedicated for returning students with a minimum 2.5 GPA. Arthur Hall is a substance free hall, arranged in suites with double bedrooms for new and returning students. Governor's and Senator's Hall accommodate both new and returning students. The Apartment Complex offers a variety of units for married students, civil union partners, students with children and students with more than sixty credits and a GPA of 3.0 or higher. The College has made significant renovations in several of the apartments and has scheduled the next phase of repairs for the others. Additionally new brick facades have been added to Governor and Senator Halls. Funds have been requested for restroom and shower upgrades as well as for an elevator replacement in Arthur Hall.

JSC conducts annual capital project planning as part of its budget process in conjunction with the VSC's Office of the Chancellor. It addresses projects with larger cost impacts for significant maintenance, repair and construction to campus buildings. There is a priority placed on funding for projects that address deficiencies in the campus' general quality-of-life, teaching and learning, safety features and energy conservation. Larger capital projects are often bonded as part of the state's capital budget while the College addresses certain projects within its annual operating budget.

The Self-Study identified several deficiencies and inadequacies in its current building inventory. Space for certain support services is overtaxed. At the same time, it cites concern about how to achieve the "right size" for its classroom stock. The Visual Arts Center is undersized and the studios cannot accommodate certain types of programs. The Health Services Office is undersized, inadequate, and lacks privacy space. The Dewey Center, while generally adequate for office space, lacks sufficient space for student programs. Stearns Hall is relied on for a host of student programming, particularly evening events despite ADA concerns. Additionally, JSC believes that it has the potential to increase its residential population resulting in a need for greatly upgraded and/or new residential space.

To address these many challenges, JSC hired an architectural firm in late 2004 to develop a campus Master Plan. As part of this process, the firm will analyze building conditions, inventory all space and how it is used, and provide an assessment of utility and IT infrastructure. At a minimum, the Master Plan should provide JSC recommendations for improving academic facilities, including how best to reconfigure or renovate classroom and program space to accommodate enrollment and utilization patterns. Additionally, the plan may consider other options for improving vehicular access, upgrades to meet ADA standards, and new campus beautification measures.

Strengths:

- The College employs its natural setting to full dramatic effect. It has designed and arranged its attractive buildings in the campus core to take full advantage of the views to the open spaces and fields, surrounding woods, and the hill and mountain vistas in the distance. The net effect is a memorable and pleasing campus setting. Staff take great pride in maintaining it well. Students report favorably regarding the campus facilities.
- The College is developing a Campus Master Plan to define the most desirable and needed enhancements to its facilities over the next decade. The Plan, if effective, is likely to propose a host of landscape improvements, space utilization changes, ADA compliance measures, and new building space to accommodate academic facilities and student life activities.
- The College is actively engaged in addressing its deferred maintenance. It is employing capital funds, dining and dorm funds, and operating reserves to improve energy savings, public safety, and quality of life improvements. The prioritized list documents the cost of repairs for deferred maintenance over the next decade.

Concerns:

- Housing facilities predominantly provide basic dormitory style accommodations. To make them more attractive and marketable to prospective first year students, it will be important to develop plans for refurbishing the rooms, corridors, and other interior spaces. The College can develop a housing Capital Projects program that funds new flooring, lighting fixtures, room and lounge amenities, and modernized bathroom and shower facilities.
- While the College is already engaged in an assertive program to address deferred maintenance, it is encouraged to devote a more significant amount from its operating budget whenever compelling, expensive projects cannot be funded on a timely basis from its annual capital budget allocation.

Standard Nine: Financial Resources

Despite only moderate increases in state appropriations, JSC has maintained a position of financial stability and viability. In four of the last five years, the College has operated with an ending carry forward. Slightly higher than anticipated enrollments were realized in FY 03 and FY 04 at the same time that expense controls were held in place. The moderate balances have enabled the College to fund its reserves at the level established by VSC guidelines. The reserve provides some hedge against anticipated declines in high school graduation rates - which could affect JSC enrollments - or in the event of an extraordinary expense. In the most recent period, JSC has used reserve funds to address pressing deferred maintenance projects.

A review of the JSC's Statement of Net Assets indicates that assets exceeded liabilities by \$14.182 million on June 30, 2004. Almost 80% of the total net assets are capital assets, net of related debt. The statement also shows that the College reports \$2.15 million of its net assets as unrestricted, an amount that can be used to meet its ongoing obligations and future needs. During that audited year, the net assets had grown by almost \$730,000. The College also reports that its debt service obligations are managed within its base budget.

JSC has exercised caution in discretionary spending and has made several hard decisions in recent years to eliminate and/or reduce the scope of some academic programs. Decisions to add new programs have been tempered by special considerations about student demand for the programs and concerns about start-up costs. Financial records indicate that FY 04 financial resources are appropriately concentrated on the College's educational activities. Spending for instruction, academic support, scholarships and fellowships constitute 52% of the functional expenditures.

The VSC system establishes the budget schedules and guidelines for each campus. Soon after the start of the fiscal year, the VSC requests each college to identify and prioritize capital budget proposals for the following year. Emphasis is placed on how each project will improve the quality of life and safety on campus. A detailed project and budget review is completed in conjunction with the Office of the Chancellor, including projected costs, enrollment trends, available funding, and revenue source. These factors then serve as general guidelines in developing the College's budget for the next fiscal year.

Each campus is expected to submit detailed revenue and expense reports to the Office of the Chancellor by late April. The College reviews its anticipated revenue streams, enrollment expectations, and other expense factors that may prompt budget changes at the departmental and program levels. Budget restrictions have left most departmental and program budgets unchanged from one year to the next, despite an increase in costs related to materials and supplies in particular programs. According to the self-study however, over the last two years JSC has been more responsive in adjusting budgets to reflect enrollment shifts and new departmental needs and in using more carry-forward funds for equipment repairs and renovations. Under the direction of the new dean of administration, budgets will be developed in closer consultation and with broader input from department managers ensuring that funding levels better reflect operating cost realities.

Both JSC and the VSC have emphasized the goal of keeping tuition and fees affordable. However, tuition and fees now constitute 58% of the College's annual revenues. The state contributes only 21% of revenues, a rate that puts Vermont at the 47th place in legislative contributions to public higher education. Moreover, because the College rates for its board program and housing and apartment units must be responsive to students' financial and income profiles, there is continuous pressure to keep them priced within market levels. Nonetheless, the College has insured that its campus-based auxiliary

enterprises contribute a moderate amount of net income that helps it fund needs in academic programs and support services.

The College has developed a new working model and better marketing to increase the attractiveness of its External Degree Program. It offers on-line and off campus upper division courses at thirteen locations. Significant changes were made to strengthen on-site advising and the number of majors was reduced at the same time that more courses were delivered. The College realized a thirty percent increase in enrollment since the reorganization and the efficiencies have generated more net income. Positive financial return is also realized from the College's graduate education program. Even greater growth in these programs will produce higher net income and carry-forward monies that can fund other College initiatives in its undergraduate programming and campus services. As the College self-study observes, it is important to maintain the attractiveness, accessibility and perceived value of the EDP and graduate programs if the College is to offset any enrollment decreases that may develop in its undergraduate programs due to changing demographics.

Fundraising has seen a steady progression in alumni support in the last decade. Development and Alumni Relations manages all fundraising activities, with assists from the Alumni Council and the Fund for JSC. Since 1994 it has increased the number of donors by more than 140% and increasing the value of the gifts by almost \$480,000. In the same decade the endowment has increased by over 660% to \$763,244. By March 2005 it had risen again to \$835,000. Active donors now number over 1,000. The College set a goal to increase its endowment to \$1.0 million in 2006; at the time of the report preparation, the College happily announced that it had already exceeded that goal. In its future fundraising, the College plans to strengthen its research on prospective donors among its loyal alumni and friends and to develop additional contacts with foundations and corporations. Additionally, the College has benefited dramatically from a decade of contributions totaling \$2.5 million from the Freeman Family Foundation to improve academic programs, the hospitality tourism and management (HTM) program and programs in Asian Studies. While the level of support from that foundation will step down over the next two years, the College is realizing new benefits funded by the \$1.8 million Title III strengthening institutions grant as well as collaborations with the Vermont Genetics Network (VGN) and the Vermont Science Initiative (VSC). It also won renewal of its TRIO grant of \$1.8 million that supports academic services for low-income, at-risk students and/or students with disabilities.

Strengths:

- The College's financial strength is being maintained and reserves are at a reasonable level to provide rainy day funds for offsetting enrollment fluctuations and funds for equipment replacement and major maintenance projects.

- The EDP and graduate programs are conducted in an entrepreneurial, self-sustaining manner to offer numerous distance learning sites for state residents pursuing upper level courses and certification/recertification programs.
- Fundraising is progressing in an impressive manner, with growing levels of private gifts and alumni donations, along with foundation support and grant activity.

Concerns:

- The College has managed its fiscal stability in spite of its low retention rate, but it will be most important to develop more internal means to improve retention at the time when declining high school graduation rates impact the College's ability to recruit and retain new incoming students.
- A greater concentration of funding will be necessary above current levels if the College intends timelier repairs and renovations to facilities prompted by deferred maintenance. Priority focus should continue on safety issues, energy savings, and quality of life in its renovation of academic, administrative and housing facilities.

Suggestion:

1) As part of its internal budgeting processes, it is important that the College annually develop criteria for determining strategic priorities. A more formal budget process will help broaden the College community's awareness of budget challenges and opportunities. Periodic status reports as part of the budget process will keep the campus better informed and aware of resources, as would information concerning progress towards enrollment and student retention goals.

Standard Ten: Public Disclosure

Campus publications are attractive, adequate in number, and provide information about the colleges' offerings, programs, admissions requirements, resources, and policies. Publications successfully reflect the unique flavor of campus life at JSC and the goals and accomplishments of members of the campus community are positively represented in several of the publications. Most of these publications are designed and printed on campus and effectively present the opportunities for academic, cultural, and intellectual growth at JSC. Catalogs include appropriate information on the college's mission, degree requirements and offerings, costs and fees, graduation standards, student services, facilities, faculty and staff, the academic calendar, notification of rights, and the college's accreditation status. Admissions and Financial Aid brochures and related pamphlets sufficiently portray the requirements, payment procedures and policies related to the application process and fee structure. Informational handouts are provided for first year

students and additional brochures describe academic programs, faculty qualifications, and information on careers, internships and other opportunities available to students. The campus community's core values, rights and responsibilities, policies and regulations for student conduct are clearly described in the Student Handbook. Johnson Views is an impressive magazine targeted at alumni and effectively portrays the college's commitment to community involvement and the achievements of its members.

Although the college web site is becoming multi layered and a challenge to maintain, it is fairly easy to navigate and provides access to the campus community portal. It includes the undergraduate catalog and will soon include the graduate catalog. Improvements in standards of consistency and timeliness are being developed and proposals are now being reviewed to outsource the process of maintaining and updating the content.

Strengths:

- The newly appointed Dean of Institutional Advancement plans to review all materials produced in the department with respect to marketing goals reflected in the college's Strategic Plan. He is reviewing advertising costs and staffing needs and is developing standards for quality control and guidelines for meeting submission time lines.
- Staff in this area have good skills in design, layout, and technology and is able to produce most of the college's printing and public relations materials in house. Aside from support for increased advertising costs, the print shop and public relations budget is adequate to meet the current printing needs of the college.
- The new, centralized Datatel warehouse of supporting student registration, grading, and degree auditing is more user friendly. The system has more capabilities and can be an important resource for both collecting and sharing data.

Concerns:

- The coordination of diverse departments submitting information to the Coordinator of College Communications and Marketing is challenging. With new staff in place these issues are likely to be addressed.
- The Communications department members are working hard to meet deadlines for time sensitive materials; they may need additional help to be successful – and to help all of JSC be successful.
- It is not clear that the current catalog information is up to date. Previous to replacing the retired Registrar, revising and updating seems to be handled by many departments. Oversight of this process is critical to ensure accuracy, quality and integrity of materials.

Standard Eleven: Integrity

The Team was impressed with the level of honesty and openness that JSC undertook in its self study. JSC manages its affairs in the true spirit of this standard and continually seeks ways to act in a responsible and ethical manner with all its constituencies and in its operation of the College.

By its own admission, JSC has struggled with increasing diversity within its staff and student body. However, despite this demographic challenge, the College continues to seek opportunities to provide its students with exposure to different cultures, and to provide educational and/or experiential learning opportunities that expand the students' world views.

The College has identified a point person to review all college materials to insure consistency and accuracy of information as well as a second individual to insure that ADA compliance issues are addressed. While a College specific policy manual is still being developed, system-wide materials provide all employees with necessary policies for standards of behavior and procedures for due process.

The student handbook outlines clear expectations for students and consequences for inappropriate behavior. Under the theme of "Community Commitment" students are asked to partner with the College in living a life-style which values others' points of view, provides for the emotional and physical safety of all members of the community, and adheres to the standards of academic honesty and personal integrity.

Students expressed that in almost all cases, their interactions with administrative offices at the College are positive, they are treated with respect, and afforded a high level of confidentiality and privacy in dealing with personal matters. However, they did voice a concern about the lack of communication between key administrative offices that has resulted in misinformation and/or the added burden of running back and forth from office to office to resolve matters. Additionally, students noted that a lack of attention to detail in providing information on such items as their business office account, financial aid paperwork or degree audits

JSC should also be applauded for its efforts in supporting the Upward Bound program, its exceptional work with under-prepared students through its TRIO programs, and its SERVE program that provides enriching service learning opportunities for its students.

JSC students assert that the College never misrepresented itself in its admission process and has consistently delivered on promises made to provide a solid educational experience.

Strengths:

- There is a spirit of respect among all members of the College community. Students in particular note positive interactions with faculty and staff and feel that

they are treated with respect as well as afforded a high level of confidentiality and privacy in dealing with personal matters. They also report fair and consistent resolution concerning student behavioral/judicial matters.

- Academic honesty policies are clearly stated within the College's Course Catalogue and there is a commitment to high ethical standard on research involving human subjects.
- The College's commitment to providing services and personal attention to under-prepared students is commendable. Students report that the College accurately presented itself throughout the admissions process.
- The College takes an environmentally friendly approach to facility renovation projects.
- The College provides the community with a myriad of cultural events that enrich students' lives.
- Financial aid is distributed equitably on a need-based philosophy.

Concerns:

- In some cases, long-standing practices at the College have preceded the development of a policy and/or guidelines.
- There is a need for enhancements in communication and the sharing of information, in a timely manner, between all members of the College.

Suggestion:

Time and attention should be spent on development of guidelines and policy and procedure manuals. Small institutions tend to rely upon the experience of key staff, rather than codifying information and ensuring that all members of the campus community have ready access to up-to-date information. Attention to detail and increases in communication among administrative offices is paramount. This must be a shared responsibility among all community members and not viewed as the responsibility of one individual, office, or department.

Summary

In general it is the view of the Visiting Team that Johnson State College is fulfilling its mission, and that it has a critically important role to play in serving the residents of Vermont. We were impressed by the dedicated, hardworking faculty and staff, as well as the team of administrators, who working together, are bringing new energy and direction to the institution.

There is little doubt that JSC will be challenged by declining demographics and a limited state appropriation - the campus is well aware of these challenges. To successfully meet these challenges, however, the entire campus must continue to work together in a very deliberate, open and engaged fashion. The hard work and engagement of the campus has begun and has been recognized with the award of the Title III grant.

JSC is a small college. In the system of public higher education small institutions have large roles to play. Below we outline several recommendations that we believe will help position JSC to successfully meet the challenges ahead and realize a bright future.

Recommendations:

1) JSC should move deliberately to enact its strategic vision. An implementation plan, connected with resources, timelines, and measurable outcomes is important. An academic master plan as referenced in Standard Two would be a useful component of the next phase of planning, matching faculty resources (both full and part-time) with program goals and strategies for growth.

2) As part of its internal budgeting processes, it is important that the College annually develop criteria for determining strategic priorities. A more formal budget process will help broaden the College community's awareness of budget challenges and opportunities.

3) A comprehensive assessment plan is of critical importance. It is recommended that JSC embark on such a plan as soon as possible.

4) Institutional research capacity must be developed.

5) JSC must continue work to strengthen enrollment. This speaks to strategies for student recruitment as well as retention. The JSC strategic plan has identified a 20% increase in student population as an important goal. We recommend that a strong Admissions and Retention Committee be established and charged with collecting and examining data related to characteristics of admitted, persisting, and non-persisting students and developing a range of strategies both to increase the number of applications and to reduce the rate of attrition.

6) As part of a more deliberate approach to communication at JSC, policy and procedure manuals need to be updated and/or developed and then distributed so that all members of the campus community have ready access to current information.