

Johnson State College

Johnson, Vermont

November 4, 2008

A Progress Report

Continuing and Sustained Planning Efforts as Johnson State College

Areas of Focus:

- Collegewide Strategic Planning
- Academic Planning to include Enrollment and Assessment
- Capacity to Support and Sustain Planning Efforts



Institutional Overview

Mission Statement:

The Johnson State 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.

Johnson State College (JSC) is a four-year professional and liberal arts college located in the village of Johnson, Vermont (pop. 3300) in the northern part of the state. Johnson State's 350-acre campus is an hour's drive from Burlington, Montpelier, and the Canadian border. Johnson State College is one of five colleges in the Vermont State Colleges system. The College operates under the authority of the Vermont State Colleges Board of Trustees and the Chancellor of the VSC system. The Chancellor cultivates strong local leadership and gives administrators wide latitude for planning, curriculum, instruction and operations.

The institution was founded as a teachers' training facility in 1828 and evolved into a Teachers' College in 1947, and finally, in 1962, a member of the newly formed Vermont State Colleges system. Today, education is still a signature program at the College. It takes its place alongside programs in the creative arts, environmental sciences, business, and the social sciences. The College's 1,000 on-campus undergraduates are taught by a cadre of 55 full-time faculty members, assisted by part-time faculty members. Additionally, the College has 280 students in three graduate master's level programs and 500+ students in an off-campus, community-based bachelor's degree program. The three cohorts of students total just under 1,900 students (Fall 2008).

Students at Johnson State College often contend with financial barriers to continuing and completing their educations. As of Academic Year 06-07 (the most recent year for which we have this data), Johnson State students are more than ten percentage points more likely than students at our peer institutions to qualify for financial aid in all categories: federal grants, state awards, institutional grants, and student loans. We are fortunate that a robust work study allowance is available to Johnson State to further assist our students in financing their educations.

The student population at JSC is comprised largely of Vermonters (70%), with the remaining students coming primarily from New England, and the middle-Atlantic states. Our campus-based undergraduate students are (FA08) 53% women and 47% male. The courses of study most often pursued by our campus-based undergraduate students are, in descending order: Fine and Performing Arts, Business, Environmental and Health Sciences, Behavioral Sciences, and Writing and Literature. The balance of our students pursue degrees in the humanities and mathematics. A significant number choose to stay with an "undecided" or exploratory major until they have attained 60 credits and are obliged to declare. Our external degree students (515 as of FA08) are largely female and in pursuit of an education, psychology, or liberal arts/general studies degree.

The last few years at Johnson State College have been marked by steady enrollment, modest growth in the size of the entering class of first-year students—as well as retention of these students—full residence halls, and an increase in the number of degrees awarded (7% increase from '08 over '03).

Review of 2003-2006 Strategic Planning at Johnson State College

Design for Our Future 2003-2006 (attached) named 11 priority planning objectives. These were addressed through regular work by groups and individuals. Some have been completed; others, expanded and extended for further work. Because a plan is only as successful as the realization of its goals, we briefly discuss the priority objectives and our progress in realizing them:

1. Design a student orientation and first-year experience.
 - Orientation and first-year experience have been completely redesigned under the leadership of our Director of First-Year Experience.
 - Orientation participation levels have grown steadily in the last two years.
 - Common Reading Initiative and First Year Seminars serve as yearlong touchstones and community-building experiences for students.
 - Orientation leaders are sophomores and juniors who apply to serve; several are retained as ongoing “embedded” leaders during the first-year.
 - Programming activities (tutoring, community dinners) have been added to the residence halls.

2. Utilize and coordinate all college resources more effectively.
 - Focusing on student services broadly defined, academic scheduling, and physical space we conducted a thorough examination of class scheduling.
 - We increased the number of Monday and Friday classes, as well as classes outside the 10 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. window. We report greater student and faculty presence on campus throughout the week.
 - A Campus Master Plan—focused on building campus community—was drafted during academic year 2004-2005 and presented to the campus in 2006.
 - Number of visiting scholars, artists, and practitioners has increased with class visits and meetings with students as part of the programming.
 - New student center has added intentional gathering spaces (fireplace lounge, radio station, meeting areas, open performance space, game room, and cinema) to encourage informal and planned activities.
 - Student input guided this planning throughout and continues.

3. Ensure that life in and out of the classroom supports the goal of a comprehensive diversity education for all students.
 - All First Year Seminars (FYS) were designed according to criteria that included a diversity component.
 - Collegewide programming intentionally features minority and non-traditional presenters and performers. Audience participation has increased since we have revised and focused our programming.

- President held a gathering of minority students and others to hear their perspectives on and suggestions for life at JSC.
 - Travel opportunities for students have increased.
4. Design a program to insure that all undergraduate students have at least one extended classroom experience.
 - In 2007, JSC instituted an annual Extended Classroom Experience showcase event. 45-50 classes and/or student groups participated, with all curricular and student activity areas represented.
 - A Director of Experiential Learning position was created.
 - President's Fund for Excellence has funded ~50 students to pursue off-campus experiences; several experiences have included faculty-student joint projects.
 - Nearly all majors now include a research, practicum, performance or internship experience.
 5. Define academic success to include the individual and social responsibilities of learning as well as the process and content of learning.
 - Residential life programming has increased.
 - JSC has adopted the Carnegie Foundation criteria for Campus Community.
 - Interaction between faculty and staff members toward common goal has increased.
 6. Create an academic structure that ensures excellence by strengthening learning across academic areas.
 - First Year Seminars are interdisciplinary by design.
 - *The Creative Audience*: a course to be launched FA09 will be required of all students, and focused on performance and presentations across disciplines.
 - Interdisciplinary graduation standard for Quantitative Literacy adopted FA08 by Faculty Assembly.
 - Standards for Internships in all majors adopted AY06-07.
 7. Provide full-and part-time faculty and academic staff with professional development opportunities to support and realize curricular objectives.
 - Instituted Summer Workshops for full-and part-time faculty (06, 07, 08) for the creation of interdisciplinary First Year Seminars; to date 34 have participated.
 - Conducted Summer workshop on Diversity and Inclusion for faculty members, summer '06
 - *President's Fund for Excellence, Title III funding, and general college funding have supported a number of faculty members in curricular-focused travel and conference opportunities.*
 8. Examine the aims, standards, practices, outcomes and assessment of reading, writing, quantitative, creative, and critical thinking skills.
 - JSC has adopted graduation standards in Writing, Quantitative Reasoning, and Information Literacy, and this year is piloting a graduation standard in Oral Communication.
 - Created *The Creative Audience* course (anticipated start date: FA09) that addresses creative and critical thinking skills.
 9. Enrollment Management Planning.

- Data gathered for benchmarking enrollment information focused on students by demographic background, financial aid status, academic background, choice of major.
 - Identified strategies for recruiting of transfer students.
 - Staff have attended several professional development sessions with enrollment management experts.
 - Enrollment targets for first-to-second-year success and improved graduation rates have been set.
 - IPEDS peer group serves to benchmark JSC progress in enrollment persistence.
10. Become more expert in all form of report generation and usage.
- Registrar has assumed the duties of Institutional Research specialist.
 - Reports available for student headcount and enrollment pyramids over last five years.
 - Reports produced and shared among Deans, Associate Deans, Faculty Assembly officers with invitation for further conversation.
11. Commit to ongoing planning in all aspects of college operations (see below).

Post-2006 Strategic Planning Activities: A Three-Year Plan for Early and Sustained Student Success

Even more noteworthy and exciting to us are the new program initiatives and the progress on many fronts. Our 2003-2006 College Plan: *Design For Our Future* positioned us well in our successful bid for a Title III Strengthening Institutions Grant. We were awarded this five-year, \$1.8 million grant beginning October, 2005 through 2010. The single—but multi-strategy—focus of our ambitious TIII project is to address retention of prematurely departing students, a category that includes under-performing as well as successful students. Intrigued by the bi-furcated nature of our departing students, we set for ourselves a range of strategies focused on early and sustained engagement of students, a blurring of the lines between academic and student life at the college, meaningful common experiences for entering students, strategic use of the whole campus—within and beyond the classroom—as a resource for student success, the arts and cultural events as vehicles for inter-disciplinary connections, and well-articulated academic expectations for students from their first JSC experience.

We developed a detailed multi-year plan to guide our TIII efforts. *The First Year: A Three-Year Plan for Early and Sustained Student Success at Johnson State College* (attached) has been guiding our efforts since late 2005. Indeed, the implementation of this plan has vigorously engaged JSC administrators, staff, and faculty these last three years; participation in working toward the achievement of its six goals has depended upon—and continues to depend on—as many as 100 members of the JSC community. We will discuss this plan again, later in this report (a copy of which appears in the Appendix), but here will mention, briefly, a few of the most prominent accomplishments:

- All entering first-year students choose from an array of specifically designed content-rich First Year Seminars and rate these courses high.
- JSC's Common Reading Initiative is an undisputed success. Programming begins at summer registration, and continues throughout New Student Orientation, and the first year.

- Extended Classroom Experience annual showcase attracts hundreds of visitors each spring.
- Premature student departure rates are beginning to fall at a rate of ~2 points per year.

Current and Ongoing Strategic Planning

As noted above, the final priority objective of our 2003-2006 *Design for our Future* plan is to “Commit to ongoing planning in all aspects of college operations.” Planning has, in fact, become the underlying and guiding activity at JSC these last two years. (It should be noted that college planning occurs at the same time as a newly launched Vermont State Colleges system-wide plan begins). As we approached the completion of *Design For Our Future* and launched our Title III *Plan for Early and Sustained Student Success*, we were well-positioned for our next phase of planning. Undertaking the College’s first Campus Master Plan assisted us further as we closely linked our physical campus planning to our program planning initiatives.

In Spring 2008, we identified six strategic goals, shared them with the college community, and presented them to the Board of Trustees. While these goals were originally named as goals for the 2008-2009 academic year, we quickly realized that they represent the core activities and areas crucial to our continuing success. As such, they were recast as the multi-year goals to make up the next multi-year strategic plan.

The President’s Council, a group comprised of the president, deans, associate deans, Director of the External Degree Program, and faculty assembly officers, agreed to serve as the steering committee for crafting a multi-year plan to follow the gains of the last strategic plan and the direction and accountability of the planning for the current year and through the next five years. Our commitment is to a strategy blueprint that will be a guiding document capable of flexibility and responsiveness.

Over the next three months the six planning groups—one for each priority—will develop indicators of success out to 2014, develop financial strategies to support the work, check for alignment of all goals and finalize the draft plan. A campus-wide meeting will be scheduled for early in the Spring 09 semester for review and input. Following this open session, the work plan will be reviewed, changed, adjusted and approved.

The goals are introduced briefly and then more fully discussed one by one:

1. **Finalize a plan and action steps of the Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) influenced model of enrollment management to address recruitment and retention issues of campus-based and External Degree Program (EDP) students.**

2. **Early and Sustained Student Success:** Continue to carry out the Goals of the College's Title III plan for the year and begin transitional planning to a post-Title III environment. Identify and plan for those early success initiatives that transcend 'first-year' and hold promise for more experienced students.
3. **Academic Planning:** Complete and finalize the College's academic plan. Components of the plan will include academic program planning, assessment and forecasting; faculty and student recruitment; degree completion; and scheduling.
4. **Development:** Finalize a comprehensive strategic plan for individual, corporate, foundation investment in the College.
5. **Campus Transformation:** Design and complete capital projects, including the College's new student center, gateway to campus, gym and exercise facilities upgrades, and enhancements to science and studio arts laboratories. Leverage all campus improvement to benefit and move forward the College's strategic plan.
6. **Civic Engagement:** Develop a plan and action steps to expand and deepen the College's role and responsibility as citizen of the State of Vermont and Lamoille County. Plan will include academic and intellectual engagement, internships and service, and how the College can expand its role as a cultural and artistic resource.

1. Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) Summer and Fall 2008 update

Overview

For several years Johnson State College has been engaged in the process of redefining its approach to student recruitment and student retention. The work—begun in response to declining inquiries by prospective students, the anticipated demographic decline in college-aged students, and the recognition that retention rates at JSC were unacceptably low—initially followed parallel tracks, with recruitment initiatives resting with the office of Admissions and retention with the office of the Academic Dean.

In 2006, the senior administration at the college made the decision to better coordinate recruitment and retention initiatives across the campus. As a first step, a group representing the areas of academic affairs, admissions, student affairs, and the registrar attended a seminar and workshop on Strategic Enrollment Management. Following the seminar, the group was tasked with building communication lines between their respective departments and with determining the extent to which a Strategic Enrollment Management model could be developed at JSC.

SEM Advisory and Planning Group

The group was created for two purposes:

- To take a comprehensive look at recruitment and retention issues
- To develop a plan for managing enrollment practices.

The SEM Advisory Group has met during the months of May, June, and July to discuss current practices in recruitment and retention, as well as to identify areas for improvement at Johnson State College. At its first meeting the group articulated the major categories into which enrollment management operations at JSC might fit. These categories are:

- Institutional research and data management
- Student recruitment
- Student retention
- Infrastructure and resources

Setting the Stage:

Institutional research and data management

- Review of data management model created at JSC and its capabilities
- Developed a list of “peer institutions” for data comparisons.
- Members visited with Neil Fogg, head of institutional research at Northeastern University, to solicit his advice for enhancing our statistical techniques and analysis. (Fogg reminded us that improving retention does not happen overnight. It is a process of digging into the data and working with the issues over time. NU’s first-year retention has increase from 71 – 91%, but over 15 years.)
- Discussed the ability of research to inform recruitment strategy, i.e., to target some recruitment by program or major.

Student recruitment

- Discussed several studies on the changing demographics and its effect nationally and regionally.
- Reviewed current practices in student recruitment in each of the following areas: campus-based undergraduate, EDP, and graduate. At this time, these are separate functions, not coordinated through the College’s admissions office.
- Reviewed VSC’s mission to serve Vermonters.
- Discussed JSC’s current marketing tactics and those of some competitors.

Student retention

- Read and considered an article, “Retention: An Admission Concern,” which was submitted to the group.
- Discussed current retention initiatives, i.e., expanded orientation, Common Reading Initiative, advising.
- Discussed the College’s ability to handle an influx of “transition” or “high need” students. Some demographic studies suggest a larger pool of less-prepared students

Infrastructure and resources

- Discussed current staffing and funding for the areas of admissions, financial aid, marketing.
- Considered importance of data management and institutional research and the registrar's ability to meet expanding College needs.
- Discussed current staffing, resources for Student Affairs, advising (TRIO), career services, and other student-related offices and those offices' ability to meet the needs of students.

Guiding Principles for a Strategic Enrollment Plan:

- Ensure that admissions efforts start by "recruiting graduates."
- Involve faculty in recruitment and retention.
- Encourage admissions staff's continuing attention to student persistence and success.
- Diversify the ranks of our student body as a means of addressing the emerging needs of Vermont and of meeting the demographic challenge ahead.
- Develop our capacity for coding and analyzing the variables that matter, rather than the ones that are simply easy to code.
- Ensure that our data displays and reports reflect a truly new SEM mentality, rather than the outmoded "relay race" model, in which reportage stops at deposits.

Proposed steps for further action:

- College-wide education and internal marketing effort to let people know how crucial an integrated effort is, that they must participate, and how they can participate.
- Commitment to this integrated effort made an explicit part of the hiring process for all new faculty and staff.
- Expanded focus on institutional research to know who our students and potential students are – and how they do once they get here, including in extra- or co-curricular activity.
- Identification of our strongest programs (in terms of students' success) and increased recruitment efforts for them.
- Continued emphasis on the First Year Experience.
- Expansion/adaptation of the First Year Experience model to serve students beyond the first year, on campus and off campus.
- Fuller consideration of the needs of transfer students, on campus and off campus.
- Continued focus on student life and connecting it with academic programming.
- Surveys of students to determine needs; research on other colleges' best practices.
- More flexible General Education Core Curriculum.
- More varied scheduling of courses and greater variety of delivery formats.

- Expansion of online and hybrid programming with appropriate support.
- Possible expansion of graduate programs off campus and through EDP.
- Possible addition of certificates, institutes, and non-credit offerings.
- Possible expansion of summer programming.
- Administrative and academic support services geared more fully toward all students, including graduate students and undergraduates off campus as well as on campus.
- Adjustment of financial model and facilities plan to support an integrated model.

Areas of specific enrollment focus :

Increasing the Non Traditional Learning Base

1. In light of the well-documented demographic reality of an aging Vermont with a diminishing number of high school graduates, attention must be paid to new and different student groupings.
2. Consistent with our institutional mission, identity, and future plans, JSC must carefully consider the role each of the following student groups should play in its overall enrollment management strategy:
 - Non traditional degree seekers.
 - Those in the labor force who seek job-related education and skill training;
 - Older learners who seek viable certificates.
 - Dual enrollees from area high schools.
 - High school "leavers" who achieve equivalency.
 - Learners committed to personal development who might benefit from various forms of non-credit programming, including auditing.
 - Prospective graduate students.
 - Those who aim to change careers.
3. We observe that the redeployment of recruitment/admissions resources in pursuit of #2 (above) may temporarily affect more traditional enrollment categories. To address the needs of non-traditional learners, we recommend that JSC consider more flexible delivery modes and learning options and, where necessary, provide the professional development for staff and faculty to realize them.
4. We must continue to collect and assemble data on the categories of learners in #2 (above).
5. The data collection and mining must accompany a careful cost-revenue analysis of pursuing these options.

6. To serve non traditional learners, colleges need to develop appropriate recruitment, orientation, transfer assessment, and communications mechanisms. Often these will differ from those used for our traditional-age learners.
7. Finally, we recognize that sustainable progress in the directions suggested here will necessitate careful needs assessments.

Focus on Transfer Students:

- Develop marketing materials for transfer students (transfer packet)– in progress.
- Provide EDP advisors at CCV sites better/more promotional information – in progress.
- Expand admissions activities for transfers (info sessions, campus tours, day visits).
- Identify academic programs to develop 10 articulation agreements with out-of-state community colleges:
 - Northern Essex Community College (MA) – Grace Young
 - Quinsigamond Community College (Worcester, MA) – Hadley Greenfield Community College (Greenfield, MA)
 - Manchester Community College (Manchester, NH)
 - Lakes Region Community College (Laconia, NH)
 - Clinton Community College (Plattsburgh, NY)
 - Southern Maine Community College (South Portland, ME)
 - CT Community Colleges –
- Streamline the credit evaluation review; currently it's cumbersome and does not provide the transfer applicants with timely information.
- Enhance our registration/orientation program for transfers.
- Explore financial aid incentives; discount /transfer scholarships for students transferring from CC.

2. Early and Sustained Student Success

The First Year: A Three-Year Plan for Early and Sustained Student Success at JSC describes in detail the strategies that have characterized our work to date. The 2008-2009 work is focused on identifying the most promising initiatives for students *beyond* their first year. Our belief is that much of what “works” for new students—community, connection, strong focus on academic programming—are crucial for success throughout the college career. We have committed to, by 2014, a first-to-second year retention rate of 75% and a six-year graduation rate of 50%.

3. Academic Planning

As it should be, this area is the heart and soul of our planning and focus.

Johnson State College highlights undergraduate programs in fine and performing arts (including journalism and creative writing), teacher education, and environmental science, its three graduate programs (Education, Counseling, and Studio Arts), and programs delivered through the External Degree Program. The identification of these as “flagship” programs gains force by testing them against the criteria for comparative program decisions advanced by Roger Benjamin, President of the Council for Aid to Education. Each is of high quality, in terms of student learning. Each is central to the College’s mission and/or history. For each there is student demand, and each possesses some comparative advantage over competitors. The inclusion of environmental science is, in part, aspirational, based upon a promising “culture of undergraduate research” and a common faculty-student research agenda that the department is working hard to implement.

Although these, as anchors, are particular candidates for institutional investment, at this time the College is not looking to discontinue other programs as a major component of academic planning. For one thing, contracts with represented faculty and staff groups do not favor a strategy of program discontinuation, and the prevalence of senior faculty members further constrains the College’s ability to pursue such a strategy. More importantly, some adequate but not necessarily distinctive programs (e.g., Anthropology/ Sociology) are important for a predominantly undergraduate institution; others (e.g., Mathematics) attract very high quality students, but only a handful; others (e.g., Wellness & Alternative Medicine) show promise for development as “rising stars”; while still other programs (e.g., Business) are revenue-generators. For these, the aim would be to pursue constant improvements in program quality and demand, under conditions of approximately steady funding. The need to seize opportunities for new program development or, more gloomily, budget exigencies may alter this general plan.

Johnson State College uses a variety of tools to assist in academic planning:

- Governance, advisory, and informal bodies committed to robust academic programs. The President convenes several bodies on a regular basis to advise and assist her in planning and direction setting. For purposes of academic planning, the most important of these bodies are the President’s Council, composed of senior staff members and faculty leaders, and the Council of Department Chairs, convened by the Academic Dean. Besides department chairs, the latter body also includes Faculty Assembly leadership and representation from the External Degree Program.
- Vermont State Colleges Policy 109 mandates the annual review of low enrolled programs across the system. Through this intentionally quantitative policy (accessed through www.vsc.edu Public reports and data, Policy 109) the VSC Board of Trustees charges the colleges with and establishes guidelines for an Annual Enrollment Review: annual college reviews of degree program enrollment, retention and graduation data to determine which, if any, programs should be designated by the

presidents as “low-enrolled” and thus slated for additional review at the college and system levels. This year, under this policy, two JSC programs have been identified for six-month reports to the president: Biology and Theatre/Drama. These reports will give respective departments and the academic dean an opportunity to review enrollment trends and course adjustments, as needed.

- A major tool in academic planning is Vermont State Colleges Policy 101, (accessible through www.vsc.edu public information and reports, Policy 101) which provides for a system-wide review every five years of each academic program, including general education. Policy 101 includes both quantitative and qualitative dimensions. Through this policy “the Board of Trustees charges the colleges with and establishes guidelines for an Academic Program Review: a VSC-wide review of degree programs by discipline to assess how well programs fulfill the VSC mission, demonstrate high quality through student outcomes and contribute to the academic and financial viability of the college and system. Generally 4-6 disciplines will be reviewed annually, establishing a five-year review cycle for most programs.” Review committees convene annually to discuss reports submitted by the various academic programs and to make recommendations for program improvement.

Members include institutional representatives as well as outside experts. The viewpoints of community members generally receive special attention in these review proceedings. All members are encouraged to adopt a stance as “critical friends,” as the process has continued to gain in rigor, depth of review, and comprehensiveness. As can be seen from the template for reportage (attached), a major emphasis of this academic review process is upon demonstrating program effectiveness through outcomes-based assessment of published learning objectives. At JSC, department chairs and faculty colleagues continue to struggle with assessment, with uneven progress in gathering data that is then used for curricular improvements and gains in teaching and learning. The aim is to have end-of-program assessment systems in place for all programs, complete with a functioning “feedback” loop to program improvements, by the time of the College’s fifth-year interim report. The best programs will also have mid-program and post-program assessment protocols by then.

- A significant aspect of the review of academic programs under Policy 101, and an important tool for academic planning, is Appendix D: Cost Revenue Analysis by program, department, and by section. (attached) According to policy documentation:

The purpose of the Policy 101 appendix D report is to provide cost revenue data on all VSC academic programs in a routine and reliable way.

The report utilizes a set of calculations that compares all the expenses associated with instruction (faculty salaries and benefits, department costs, and the total operating expenses of the college), with all the income associated with instruction (tuition, fees, and state appropriation), and then allocates the income and expenses on a student by student basis. Each student enrolled in each course (with an affiliated department) brings in tuition based on their residency and tuition rate. If the student comes from Vermont, a portion of the state appropriation helps cover the cost of his tuition. A portion of the faculty salary is allocated to each class an instructor teaches, which

varies according to faculty rank, points or credits taught, and full-time or part-time status. The cost of instruction is therefore a portion of the faculty salary and benefits, the department expenses, and the overhead of the college. An academic department or program is profitable if the income exceeds expenses.

As mentioned above, a copy of the most recent cost revenue analyses for JSC programs is attached.

- Another element of academic planning, including resource allocations, is the assessment of general education competencies through a program of "graduation standards," mandated by the VSC Board of Trustees and Council of Presidents. All students must satisfy graduation standards in four areas: writing, quantitative reasoning, information literacy, and oral communication. While the continued development and improvement of graduation standards is an ongoing process, Johnson State College has implemented assessments in writing, quantitative reasoning, and information literacy. The College is piloting the graduation standard in oral communication this year, with full implementation expected next year.
- The Commission has provided the College with important tools for academic planning. These include "Becoming more explicit in looking at student success" (the E-series), form E1A. and E1B. for the approach we have selected (an inventory of program assessment and specialized accreditation), and the data forms on student success (the S series).
- To gain insight into academic master planning practices at peer institutions, the College commissioned Eduventures, a Boston-based educational research firm, to do a custom research inquiry and report (attached) on "Academic program planning: Models and criteria for decision-making."
- Since the team visit, the College has made a major investment in the professional development of its lead institutional researcher, college Registrar Doug Eastman. That investment has been repaid in full. Working closely with the academic dean and president, he has made great strides in providing the College with systematic and regular data reports in areas critical to academic planning (see attached for list of sample reports). These include fine-tuned analyses and tracking of incoming freshmen as well as the federal cohort, strategic enrollment management pyramids that track students from inquiries and applications to eventual graduation, student retention/attrition and graduation data for all departments and academic programs, time-to-graduation and academic scheduling data, and a variety of comparisons with a peer comparison group selected from IPEDS peer selection tools. Now we also use this peer group to compare results on the annual National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE).
- Two planning processes have directly informed master planning in the academic area. *Design for Our Future: JSC College Plan 2003-2006* (appended to this report) has already been discussed. Utilizing resources from a five-year Title III ("Strengthening Institutions") grant from the U.S. Department of Education, the College has made a major investment in revising the experience for beginning students at JSC. An ambitious plan to accomplish this transformation (*The First Year: A Three-Year Plan for Early and Sustained Student Success at JSC,*) (appended to this report) identifies six strategies for success: recreate first year advising, develop the extended classroom experience, increase and celebrate diversity,

transform co-curricular events into an all-college commitment, utilize all campus resources for student success, and use institutional research to inform decision-making. These highly intentional efforts to enrich the academic and co-curricular lives of freshmen, and to build connections among students, between students and faculty/staff, and between students and the campus, have enormous implications for academic planning. In particular, as the College enters a new round of planning, we seek to apply successful teaching and learning strategies from the first-year to all academic programs and to other categories of students (starting with transfers and sophomores) besides freshmen. This means that, to insure the continuation and ongoing success of students, all programs need to be marked—among other characteristics—by high quality academic advising, by systematic assessment and public disclosure of results, and by accessible scheduling, (see attached for evidence of progress in academic scheduling). Additional markers career exploration, by inclusiveness and the diversity of perspectives, and by experiential learning and public events components.

4. Development

Johnson State College is in the quiet or extended leadership phase (1.5 to 2 years) of a fundraising campaign, following the advice of two fundraising consultants. During this phase, we are 'floating' our proposed goal while continuing to assess the interests and capacity of our prospects. Also, at the advice of our consultants, we are conducting an open-ended campaign. We were quickly successful in matching for endowment the \$365,000 that the Title III Grant permits us to match. These gifts align with our goal of increasing student persistence and success. We are aware that we are building a culture of giving and investment within a college that has not had this tradition.

Engaged in the planning and execution of this goal are the President, Dean of Institutional Advancement, two development officers and other key college personnel. The President is advised by board members of The Fund for Johnson State College.

Our priorities for this campaign fall into three broad categories:

- Capital (Student Center, science and art lab upgrades)
- Endowment funds for faculty and student support
- Current use/ annual gift funds for faculty and student support

5. Campus Transformation

The planning group for campus transformation includes a core group as well as a flexible list of participants depending on the particular project being planned. For example, our recently launched new student center renovation had, as its steering group, a committee led by Dean of Administration; other participants included the Physical Plant Director, key persons from the Dean of Students' office, and student members. The attachment on Capital Planning Projects more fully describes our planning and accomplishments. Our careful planning has resulted in successful completion of new student center, upgrade to residence

hall rooms, a lighted and paved walkway from our apartments to campus, and the cohabitation of our wellness and counseling centers.

6. Civic Engagement

While the College has a strong tradition of service and involvement through its service learning projects, legislative debates and forums; internship and student teaching; and local research and scholarship, we have not authored a formal plan for these involvements.

We are excited to add this priority area to our planning goals. The President and newly named Director of Experiential Learning will convene this planning group. For an update on current and ongoing workforce engagement—an important dimension to our citizenship in our county and state—the JSC website is informative. www.jsc.edu/Academics/BusinessAndEconomics/NonprofitManagementCertification

Conclusion

The incentives for Johnson State College to stay true and committed to our mission and to support this commitment by well-articulated planning for our future are many. Planning insists that we articulate and ‘publish’ our goals; holds us accountable to ourselves; inspires our confidence in the future we design and create. As well, good planning bridges the space between current and future and insists, in the interests of securing our future, that we take the best of ‘now’ and move it forward while we let go what no longer serves and fits.

A recent piece in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, “Financial Crisis Could Give Jolt to Strategic Planning on Campuses” reminds us (were we to need reminding) that the mission-driven reasons for planning share space with the hard and cold pressures of our current climate. We will be grateful for the blueprints that are *our* design, when aligning resources with thoughtful decisions increasingly becomes our terrain

We are confident that our ongoing strategic planning across all the key areas of Johnson State as well as the investment in personnel to become expert in planning position us well for the years and choices ahead.

