



FIFTH YEAR REPORT

Submitted to the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC)

August 15, 2010

**JOHNSON STATE COLLEGE
Johnson, VT**

Johnson State College
New England Association of Schools and Colleges
Fifth-Year Report
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I. Introduction

Preparations for Johnson State College's fifth-year response began in earnest with the receipt of the commission's accreditation letter of 21 December 2005. The document was reviewed in meetings of the President's Council, the College Council, the Faculty Assembly, as well as campus-wide open meetings. These discussions laid the foundation for the direction of the College's most recent strategic plan, which began in January 2008. The priority areas of this plan confirm the observations of the commission:

- Increase academic challenge and student achievement
- Foster early and ongoing student success
- Identify and enroll student most likely to thrive and succeed at JSC
- Strengthen JSC's contributions to Lamoille County and Vermont
- Align campus and technology upgrades with academic priorities
- Strengthen JSC's future through gifts, grants and investments

The formal process that led to the creation of this interim report started in September 2009, when President Barbara Murphy asked Academic Dean Daniel Regan and Faculty Librarian Joseph Farara to oversee the compilation process for the final report. In October 2009, they attended a NEASC workshop in Bedford, MA, that focused on writing a 5th-year response under the commission's new standards. Upon their return, assignments were given to department heads to begin collecting relevant data. Periodic meetings kept these assignments on task.

Senior administrators were asked to draft chapters for their respective standards in June 2010. The Academic Dean and Faculty Librarian spent the following six weeks revising their work and fine-tuning the required data sets. Their work was ably assisted by the following contributors:

President Barbara Murphy, Academic Dean Daniel Regan, Dean of Students David Bergh, Dean of Administration Sharron Scott, Associate Dean of Enrollment Services Penny Howrigan, Co-Director of the External Degree Program David Cavanagh, Controller Toby Stewart, Registrar Douglas Eastman, Director of College Communications Deborah Bouton, Faculty Librarian Joseph Farara, Circulation Supervisor Walter Reeve, Technical Services Librarian Raymond Brior, Interlibrary Loan Supervisor Alice Kirk, Library Specialist Pamela Gelineau, Web Editor Melissa Weinstein, Chair of the Faculty Assembly and Assistant Professor of Writing and Literature Tyrone Shaw, Staff Assistant Jean Reynolds, Executive Assistant to the President Heloisa Dantas-Herder, Administrative Assistant Cathy Higley, Associate Director of Admissions Rebecca Pastor, and Admissions Counselor Joye Lyon, Assistant Dean of College Life Michele Whitmore, Professor of Writing and Literature Andrea Perham, Director of the First Year Experience Margo Warden, Associate Professor of Mathematics Christopher Aubuchon, Professor of Fine Arts John Miller, Associate Professor of Music Stephen Blair, Professor of Environmental Science Elizabeth Dolci, Professor of Business and Economics Todd Comen, Professor of Business and Economics Reed Fisher, Professor of Behavioral Sciences Eleanor Webber, Professor of Behavioral Sciences Susan Green, Professor of Education Kenneth Brighton, and Professor of Humanities Frederick Wiseman.

II. Institutional Overview

Johnson State College is a rural public college in Johnson, VT, one of five institutions that make up the Vermont State Colleges. Many of its students are native Vermonters, who are often the first in their family to pursue a college degree. The College also operates the External Degree Program, a non-residential degree program that allows non-traditional learners the opportunity to study online and in courses that take place across the state in various locations. There are also three Master's-level graduate degrees offered by the college: Education, Counseling, and Fine Arts.

Highlights of college activity since the last accreditation visit include:

- Improved retention from first to second year (p. 14)
- Created Common Reading Initiative (p.14)
- Completed new strategic plan (p. 16)
- Managed successfully a \$1.8M Title III Grant (p. 17)
- Developed a comprehensive academic master plan (p. 22)
- Added 18 new faculty members (p. 22)
- Received authorization of online degree programs (p. 24)
- Grew campus and distance programs (p. 24)
- Established Office of First Year Experience (p. 29)
- Implemented First Year Seminar program (p. 29)
- Launched Creative Audience program (p. 29)
- Improved transfer guidelines and orientation (p 29)
- Created Crisis Response Team (p. 30)
- Created information literacy instruction space (p. 30)
- Expanded library digital holdings (p. 31)
- Renovated academic and student space (p. 32)
- Instituted budget process tied to mission and goals (p 36)

Area of Special Emphasis 1: Using the results of planning to inform budgeting.

Since the Commission heightened attention to this priority, Johnson State College can point to numerous examples of using the results of planning to inform budgeting. Among them:

- At present members of the President’s Council, the core planning group, are charged with identifying the resource implications of **JSC 2010-2015: A Plan for Access, Engagement & Success**. The goal is to determine the funding mix (institutional budget, private gifts, grants, etc.) necessary to support the plan’s initiatives. Concretely, we hope—by early 2011—to have developed one-page “fact” sheets on each major initiative, specifying the action to be taken, why it is important, how we would know if it is successful, and how it will be funded.
- As discussed in the narrative on Standard Four, academic planning has meant the College’s continued investment in renewing faculty ranks. During AY 2009-2010 five new faculty members were hired, representing nearly 10% of the entire full-time faculty. Two hires took place in 2008-2009, 2 in 2007-2008, 4 in 2006-2007, and five occurred during 2005-2006.
- College planning has highlighted several signature programs as well as an emerging culture of research. Besides investments in personnel (above), as detailed elsewhere in this report JSC has made a significant investment in the infrastructure to support science labs and digital media as well as other art-related facilities.
- In light of demographic trends and economic stringency for the state and region, planning has sharpened our sense of the institution’s core mission, especially to educate Vermonters. As a result, in 2010 the College made the difficult but necessary decision to close a high quality child development center, which drained revenue and was not tied to an academic department or program.
- Planning has meant a stepped-up pace of grant submissions to help support institutional priorities. Just recently, for instance, in line with the college completion goals of the five-year plan, JSC (jointly, with the Community College of Vermont and CAEL) submitted a “completer” project proposal to the Lumina Foundation and to FIPSE. We also submitted a FIPSE proposal for a “distributed” model of teacher education, one of our signature programs. In line with our resolve to build a culture of undergraduate research, JSC has also submitted a proposal to NSF for scholarships to support science students.
- JSC made a 2007 presentation to the Vermont State Colleges Board of Trustees, **Design for Our Future: Capital Projects at Johnson State College** (<http://www.jsc.edu/WhoWeAre/InitiativesAndReports/NEASC/CapitalProjectsatJSC.pdf>), which was based upon a two-year master facilities planning process by the college and JMZ Architects.

- The College’s current plan is explicit about the alignment of budgets to strategic planning priorities. During the next budgeting cycle, the focus will remain on the goals of departments and funding them in accordance with the strategic plan.
- Most of all, JSC has made a budgetary commitment to sustain the initiatives of our successful Title III/Strengthening Institutions grant, focused on first-year transformation. “Life after Title III” (grant support concludes September 30, 2010) has long been a subject of discussion on our campus, including—importantly—the matter of sustainability. We found a way to fund grant-supported staff members and arrived at an agreed-upon schedule to shift them to institutional funding. In fact the President sought to speed up the pace of those transfers. The acceleration provided testimony to the campus of top-level commitment to the aims of the Title III project and made the budgetary “hit” more gradual and bearable. As for grant-supported programming, we found it useful to categorize initiatives into those that must absolutely be continued, those that should be continued unless economic stringency or other factors compromise our ability to do so, and those initiatives which, although desirable, might be expendable. From this categorization we arrived at a mix to continue their funding, relying mostly on the college budget with tuition as its major source of revenue as well as slightly enhanced student fees.
- JSC’s Title III project director and academic dean gave a presentation to other project directors in Washington, D.C. (2010) on “Life after Title III: The Four Ps of Grant Sustainability.”
- Anticipating the conclusion of Title III-supported initiatives, the College commissioned the Boston-based educational research firm, Eduventures, to identify Opportunities for Grant Funding after Title III (http://www.jsc.edu/WhoWeAre/InitiativesAndReports/NEASC/CI_GrantFundingSources_Eduventure.pdf).

Area of Special Emphasis #2 and #3: Implementing the results of its planning in the area of assessment and including benchmarks and other indicators of success in its strategic plan

Johnson State has had substantial success implementing the results of planning in the area of assessment. The College has also made substantial progress incorporating benchmarks and other indicators of success in its strategic plan.

We shall review our progress on these related concerns simultaneously.

JSC 2010-2015: A Plan for Access, Engagement & Success points clearly to student success as its overarching outcome. That outcome, in turn, has explicit targets built into its realization. First, the College will see continued improvement, at the rate of two percent per year, in first-to-second year retention among all student cohorts. Meeting this ambitious but attainable target would continue increasing the first-to-second year persistence rate to seventy-five percent, by the time the plan concludes. Second, all student cohorts will accelerate their time to graduation, at a rate of three percent improvement per year, with the goal of fifty percent graduating within six years by 2015. Because a cohort's first-to-second year continuation rate is the major variable affecting its eventual graduation rate, these anticipated improvements are closely related.

The various activities, projects, and strategies contributing to these improved outcomes are themselves to be evaluated in the context of the year-by-year work plans. Indicators of interim success appear throughout the plan, starting with its academic priorities.

To expand the emerging culture of research, for instance, undergraduate research opportunities will increase by one department in year #1. Toward all students' having at least one significant extended classroom experience that connects experiential education with classroom learning, the annual Extended Classroom Experience showcase event will expand in the number of student presentations and displays, in the number of community organizations represented and in the number of community partners attending. Students will report an increased level of academic challenge on the annual NSSE. Credit-heavy majors will be targeted for specified reductions. The College will steadily decompress academic scheduling, with a ten percent improvement in course starts outside of "prime time" expected by spring 2011. Two open forums will be held to present and discuss findings from analyses of progress in increasing student success and academic challenge. And several items focus on a key outcome related to the commitment of academic programs to continuous progress through improved program assessments.

Other priorities of the plan similarly articulate goals accompanied by indicators of their realization and analyses at intermediate steps. The enrollment management priority, for example, aims at benchmarks for retention and graduation rates and goals specifically for transfer students. It commits us to develop, but also annually to assess, a comprehensive marketing plan, adjusting as necessary to meet recruitment goals. Because the admission rates of students receiving aid must increase, according to the plan, the College will analyze matriculation and retention rates in relation to financial aid awards over the past three years. For the civic engagement priority, according to the plan the College will identify potential funders and submit at least three grant requests in year #1.

Also for year #1 of the plan, the campus and technology upgrade priority commits the College to developing and installing a Mac lab for digital arts and a molecular science lab. Selected areas of Bentley Hall, including classrooms, labs and offices, are to be redone, as the College completes Phase I of planned renovations. JSC will fine-tune the renovations made to the SHAPE facility in FY 2010 and will select new course management software. All JSC faculty and instructors will use the VSC-approved LMS to conduct some aspect of the course(s) they teach. Meanwhile, to reduce paper volume, the Business Office will fully implement document-imaging software for Accounts Payable and Accounts Receivable, and the College will fully automate the billing/financial aid letter process. Key indicators of the priority on development include growing the JSC endowment from \$2 million to \$3 million; increasing the number of donors to JSC by ten percent per year over the next five years; and increasing the amount of giving by ten percent over the next five years.

Area of Special Emphasis #4: Connecting assessment efforts to JSC's strategic planning process

Since the Commission drew attention to this theme, the College has turned a corner in the commitment of its personnel to continuous improvement by using the evidence from assessment efforts to shape planning and action. JSC has much of importance to show in this key arena.

The title of the current College plan reveals the institution's commitment to continued broad access, student engagement on multiple levels, and college completion. The educational priorities within this over-arching commitment include increasing academic challenge and student achievement, fostering early and ongoing student success, as well as identifying and enrolling students most likely to thrive and succeed at JSC.

All of our planning emphases have been revealed by assessments. To illustrate:

- The Title III-funded project, which profoundly shapes the 2010-2015 strategic plan, grew originally from our dissatisfaction with first-to-second year student continuation rates. The project itself, focused on a range of activities to improve persistence, in turn has heightened our capacity to analyze longitudinally and in detail the trajectory and fate of student cohorts.
- We have found the five NSSE benchmarks of measurement--academic challenge, student-faculty interaction, active collaborative learning, supportive campus environment, and enriching educational experiences--to be effective devices around which to organize several of our planning initiatives. Freshmen responses to the annual NSSE have especially highlighted the importance of academic challenge and student engagement, and have served as a useful lever for planned improvements in those areas.
- A study by Eduventures of 1,121 American colleges and universities, including Johnson State, highlighted the importance of several of our planning emphases. The study revealed that we are part of a large group of "moderate underperformers" in light of a four percentage point gap between JSC's expected and actual six-year graduation rates. The finding rests upon a model for predicting six-year graduation rates based on academic, affordability, and "social environmental" factors that have been shown to have primary influence on retention and eventual completion. The analysis also revealed how critical the first year is in accounting for a class's eventual graduation rate.
- There have been assessments and evaluations of many individual projects and activities designed to improve first-to-second year persistence. These have included student evaluations of the new first-year seminars, and hour-long guided discussions with freshmen, called 20Q and based upon Richard Light's **Making the Most of College: Students Speak Their Minds** (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001). These efforts have helped us plan improvements in areas such as academic scheduling and advising, among others.

- Evaluative efforts have helped us shape and reshape amelioration efforts. Thus activities undertaken are not static, “for all time”; rather, they are experimental “works in progress.” For instance, a change in the way freshmen advising was organized has now—after weighing its results—given way to what we hope will be an improved version, to be piloted this year. And we shall have to weigh whether this strategy for organizing critical first-year academic advising better suits student needs.
- Expressed dissatisfaction with JSC’s traditional new student registrations in the summer has led, in 2010, to an entirely new protocol. Now, in line with national research findings on the importance of students’ completing an adequate number of relevant credits during freshmen year, staff members have pre-registered entering students for four courses, before they arrive on campus for the required summer, pre-orientation visit. Thus freshmen will be full-time, guaranteed a full complement of courses they need, as close to their interest areas as possible, rather than a roster of classes taken mainly to fill in a schedule because desired or needed course items are unavailable.
- Academic program reviews, under VSC Policy 101, focus on program assessment. The review process continues to shed important light on planning priorities in the various majors. Program reviews are much enriched this year by the systematic addition of “student voices” on issues pertaining to their majors as well as general education. The results of Policy 101 reviews, although not the continuing reference points that they should be, do figure importantly in department planning and, when it comes to general education, in the current, college-wide planning.

Of course, connecting assessment to planning is an ongoing JSC commitment. For the future the first priority will be a study of aid awards, relating unmet financial needs to matriculation and first-to-second year retention. We anticipate that this analysis will have implications for financial aid and SEM planning. In light of enrollment trends favoring the External Degree Program (EDP), the second assessment will examine campus vs. EDP resource allocations, both human and fiscal, and include financial models for the future EDP. Finally, of key importance will be the efforts by academic departments to make explicit use of assessment data to inform planned improvements in curriculum, teaching and learning. This will always be a focus, but it would seem an especially prominent one in the next several years.

Area of Special Emphasis #5: Continuing to enhance capacity in planning and evaluation

The College has made substantial strides to enhance the institution's capacity in planning and evaluation.

Key college bodies have become heavily and competently involved in planning. The President's Council has become an especially supple, college-wide planning entity. Most gratifying has been the involvement of full-time faculty, through the established Faculty Assembly, in planning. A group of 10-12 faculty members, appointed by the Faculty Assembly, have formed the Strategic Plan Academic Advisory Committee (SPAAC). SPAAC has become an important partner in academic planning. In the area of evaluations, the council of academic department chairs has made great, if still partial, strides to enhance its members' capacity to work with departmental colleagues in the area of program assessment. Two faculty members have joined the academic dean in a system-wide project, funded by the Davis Foundation, to enhance and improve academic program reviews, an important evaluative and planning tool. And the Office of First-Year Experience, initially inclined more toward direct service than toward evaluating its results, has developed its capacity to monitor and evaluate projects and activities designed to engage and connect students and thus facilitate improved first-to-second year persistence.

The strategic use of external consultants has been part of the forward movement in the area of capacity building. Bob Joy, a principal in JMZ Architects, helped get campus master planning off the ground. In 2008 the president engaged Jim Lefevre to assist members of her President's Council and other college leaders in launching strategic planning. Less successful at the time but still worth mentioning was an attempt to engage a consultant for a financial modeling study of the External Degree Program. Analyzing campus and EDP resource allocations, in the context of EDP planning, has resurfaced as a priority lately, in light of enrollment trends favoring off-campus sites. Also, the College has effectively used its membership in a learning collaborative at the Boston-based educational research firm, Eduventures, to "outsource" some of its institutional research needs in the area of retention.

Internal capacity building, constrained by lean staffing and budgets, has nevertheless moved forward. We have worked to free the college Registrar for the increasing demands of institutional research. He has risen to the task, with enhanced social research and technological skills through a series of professional development activities, particularly workshops, which the college has gladly funded. This has helped create a more widespread culture of evidence in which members of various college constituencies show improved abilities to interpret data, and have come to expect evidence and decision-making based upon it.

As a gratifying result of enhanced capacity, we have a plan that we are proud of and a much better "feel" for student retention and success issues. We are pleased but not satisfied with the progress made on program assessment and program reviews.

Area of Special Emphasis #6: Managing the enrollment of the institution consistent with our mission.

The College both shapes and responds to enrollment trends, always in line with the complementary missions of Johnson State and the Vermont State Colleges. The results of college deliberations on strategic enrollment management appear as the third of six priorities in JSC's 2010-2015 plan: "Identify and enroll students most likely to thrive and succeed at JSC." This comprehensive SEM plan is closely connected to the academic and student success plans that precede it. Enrollment management priorities include improving the persistence of JSC freshmen to their sophomore year, accommodating the enrollment growth of the External Degree Program, smoothing the pathways for transfer students, and generalizing the lessons learned from first-year transformation to all programs and categories of learners so as to improve timely college completion.

Accordingly, key SEM outcomes from the college-wide plan are: recruitment and retention efforts that are deliberate, informed by data, and understood as a College-wide responsibility; a comprehensive marketing program accompanied by varied communication strategies; enrollment strategies and decisions that are based on data analyses and are shared with JSC staff and faculty; transfer-friendly practices; institutional aid that supports enrollment, student success, and degree progress goals; and enrollment strategies that recognize the importance of alumni in retaining and mentoring current students. Detailed work plans with indicators of progress along the way will help us realize these key outcomes.

Consistent with national trends, the economic downturn favors Vermonters as JSC students. Just as (from Clearinghouse data) those who leave JSC turn up, if at all, at institutions closer to their places of residence and/or community colleges, so do those who enroll at JSC come increasingly from nearby and in-state locales. This comports with the VSC mission, "for the good of Vermont," which Johnson State fully embraces. We have long been aware of the declining number of Vermont high school graduates, but also of the many capable learners who graduate successfully from Vermont high schools but do not proceed to post-secondary learning. Our recruitment (and support) strategies are beginning to tap this important segment of the population. But whichever students do come our way, a signal emphasis has been and remains on getting them off to as good a start as possible, so as to pave the way for their persistence and eventual college completion.

We are also keenly aware of the hunger for higher education on the part of community-based students who are older than traditional college age and who often have family and/or work commitments and responsibilities. So far support for this student constituency has been adequate, making for a highly successful, community-based program. As has been mentioned in other segments of this report, however, college investments in EDP are up for re-examination so as to better manage EDP's future and appropriately allocate human and fiscal resources to serve both campus-based and community-based students.

Transfer students form an important segment of JSC's student population (more so if EDP students, all of whom enter with a minimum of 60 college credits, are recognized as in some

sense “transfers”). Our job this last year or two, and continuing into the future, has been to create and implement more “transfer-friendly” practices. Significant progress has been made, particularly on the smooth and timely transfer of general education credits, but much remains to be done.

Finally, a concern for college completion as part of overall “enrollment management” has led JSC, together with the Community College of Vermont and CAEL, to propose a large-scale (for Vermont) “completer project.” This proposal is currently under consideration by both the Lumina Foundation and FIPSE.

Area of Special Emphasis #7: Updating policy and procedural manuals

In its August 20, 2009 letter, the Commission requested that Johnson State College give emphasis to “updating policy and procedural manuals”. We gave priority to this area and crafted our policy manual to be a useful guide in ensuring the work of the College. As we state on our website:

Johnson State has established policies and procedures to guide the College in carrying out our essential work of teaching and learning, being in a safe and orderly community, and encouraging free expression and responsibility. In addition, policies are written to help ensure regulatory compliance, enhance the college mission, reduce institutional risk, and work in the interests of fairness and transparency.

<http://www.jsc.edu/Academics/PoliciesAndProcedures.aspx> provides a link for the reader and is accessible from both student and faculty/staff pages.

In developing policies, we consulted with the key contributing areas: Dean of Students office, Academic Dean’s office, Business office, and Registrar’s office, for example. The Deans in the respective areas took responsibility for reviewing policies already in place, updating and improving them and filling in any gaps. We attempted to write policy for the “well-meaning majority” and to anticipate areas where questions of policy might arise and guidance would resolve disagreements or clarify processes.

In addition to posting a digital version of the policy manual on our website and portal, student policies are presented in whole or part to students as part of the **JSC Student Handbook**. Similarly, individual policies are presented to personnel as relevant to their jobs.

In many cases, we defer to the Policies and Procedures of the Vermont State Colleges (VSC) (https://ganymede.ccv.vsc.edu/webapps/blackboard/content/listContent.jsp?course_id= 95069_1 &content_id= 551110_1). Most logically, this is because the VSC is our legal entity, but there are other reasons as well: the colleges share a common course list, and many academic structures that come with the shared course list (movement of students between Vermont State Colleges, standards for successful completion of courses, calculation of GPA) require VSC-wide policies. An example of the way in which the College policy manual references the VSC System manual follows:

Academic Probation/Dismissal

Johnson State College conforms to VSC Policy 111 regarding Academic Probation and Dismissal.

In addition to the cross-referencing of academic policies, we have business, personnel, student, and informational technology policies at the system level and adhere to these as member colleges. Examples include VSC Policy 311 (Non-discrimination and Prevention of Harassment and Related Unprofessional Conduct) and Policy 421 (Information Technology and Data Security Systems). While there are many policies at the system level that are specific in

requirements, many others defer to the Colleges. For example, the policy on General Education states that

All VSC institutions shall have general education programs that require matriculated students to develop skills and knowledge in:

- written and oral communications;
- natural sciences and mathematics;
- social and behavioral sciences;
- arts and humanities.

Immediately following the description above is the statement that specific requirements may vary by college. For many of us—both College and VSC personnel—the complementary nature of the policy manuals represents the best of guidance for students, faculty, and staff: mutual respect and guidance as appropriate to the particular situations when needed.

Standard One: Mission and Principles

Update

Johnson State College believes in the transformative power of higher education in the lives of students and communities, and strives to reduce or eliminate barriers that might impede that process.

The College recognizes that its broad access admissions policy is but one step towards realizing its mission. As a result, the college has taken the following steps to move us closer to meeting its spirit.

The first of these efforts was the submission and funding of a Title III grant in 2005. While the grant had been awarded by the time of the College's accreditation visit, we had yet to take advantage of it. Once it was in place, it was used to buttress numerous aspects of student persistence.

The College used its strategic planning process to prioritize initiatives and stimulate broad-based college support for them. By establishing two college-wide groups with representation from across the institution, the President's Council and the College Council, Johnson State College has been able to develop a strategic plan that focuses on student success in every aspect of the college experience.

Much of our initial work addressed the stressors that negatively affect first-year students. The successful implementation of First Year Seminars, underwritten, in part, by the Title III grant, has done much to improve retention between the freshmen and sophomore years. We've seen a continuation rate between the first and second years increase by 5.25% from Fall 2008 to Fall 2009, the last year for which we have data. The intimacy of each class (enrollment is capped at 15), the exclusive nature of the course (first-year students only), and the interdisciplinary approach, combined with learning beyond the classroom, are among the most prominent reasons for the positive indicators of this approach. Students are able to bond with one another, feel connected to faculty, librarians, and other members of the college and local communities, and what results is a deeper engagement with the college as a whole.

Another initiative underwritten by Title III is our Common Reading Initiative. All incoming students read a single text over the summer, meet in small groups to discuss it over the weekend before school starts, and then attend a series of events related to the book over the course of a semester. Similarly, every student must attend a series of campus events as part of the college's Creative Audience.

The College's longstanding commitment to service learning also works to tie a student to Johnson State College. With projects that place students within the local community, as well as hard hit areas elsewhere in the United States and neighboring countries, we've found that

students who participate in such outreach are more willing to stay engaged with the institution itself.

Buttressed by data compiled by Eduventures (<http://www.eduventures.com>), the identification of distinctive programs emerged during the strategic planning process. Given the College's long and honorable history of teacher preparation, we reconfirmed Education as one of our signature disciplines. Environmental and Health Sciences was another department the college felt deserved the designation of distinctive program. We also determined that Creative Writing and the Fine and Performing Arts are central to our identity, and that the cultural contributions of the College to the local communities are significant. As a result, the College has made hiring in these disciplines a priority for the institution, as are physical plant upgrades to related teaching spaces. In the past year, the college has added two new faculty members in Education, and one each in Digital Arts, Creative Writing, and Music. Budget resources permitting, a search for a new faculty member in Environmental Sciences will occur during AY10-11, with service beginning at the start of AY11-12. We also will conduct searches for new faculty in Psychology and Mathematics on the same schedule.

The College has invested heavily in updating Bentley Hall, the home of our Environmental and Health Sciences program, work that includes significant upgrades to our laboratories and classrooms. We've also received capital appropriations to expand the Visual Arts Center, where our arts programs have outgrown their current space. These renovations will begin at the conclusion of the upcoming academic year. In the meantime, the college has created a 16-workstation digital imaging laboratory in the Library & Learning Center, outfitted with iMacs, plotters, and scanners, to support the digital arts component of our BFA program. Title III has also funded two other initiatives that address student retention. The first focuses on advising, which the College views as an essential service in keeping students engaged and on track. The second is an endowment matching provision, which has increased the size and number of financial aid awards granted by the College.

Projection

As the College moves forward with implementing its strategic plan, we have identified the following items for improving student success:

- Students in all programs will experience an increased level of academic challenge.
- All academic programs will streamline pathways to student success.
- All academic programs will be committed to continuous improvement.
- A college-wide commitment to early student success will focus on early engagement and cut across boundaries between the divisions of Academic and Student Affairs.

Our initial work on these items has drawn deeply from the faculty (a working group, elected by the Faculty Assembly, is addressing credits in majors and is reviewing our General Education program), Student Affairs, and a variety of academic support areas. All are focused on the College's mission as they shape and direct our curriculum towards increased retention and graduation rates.

Summary Statement

The College has made significant steps in ensuring the entire college community is making the goals of our mission a reality.

Standard Two: Planning and Evaluation

Update

Johnson State College engaged in concerted, all-college planning efforts over the last five years. The results of these efforts can be found in our latest strategic plan, **JSC 2010-2015: A Plan for Access, Engagement & Success**. It can be found here:

http://www.jsc.edu/WhoWeAre/InitiativesAndReports/PDFS/2010/COLLEGE_PLAN_07-01-10.pdf

In 2008, President Murphy charged the President's Council to serve as steering committee for the planning process. Mindful of the commission's suggestions after our last accreditation visit, our work focused on academic planning and goal-setting, enrollment management consistent with our mission, and benchmarks and indicators of success. We also adopted a "critical issues" approach to planning, asking ourselves to identify the handful of crucial pieces of work that we must do to ensure Johnson's excellence in the years ahead.

After much discussion, input from members of the Faculty Assembly and the College Council, and work with an outside facilitator, the group settled on six priority areas:

- Increase academic challenge and student achievement
- Foster early and ongoing student success
- Identify and enroll student most likely to thrive and succeed at JSC
- Strengthen JSC's contributions to Lamoille County and Vermont
- Align campus and technology upgrades with academic priorities
- Strengthen JSC's future through gifts, grants and investments

While the President's Council acted as the steering committee, each area of focus had its own working group with staff and faculty involvement, with Council members serving as chair and/or members on several groups.

All of these working groups made use of the data provided to them from a variety of sources: internal data, generated from Colleague, the Vermont State College's Enterprise Resource Planning system; internal data, analyzed by Eduventures; and survey data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE). We also relied on The Vermont State Colleges' Policy 101 review process, which requires annual reviews of college programs. Having our planning rooted in this information made the process more concrete.

The data revealed that students left the College for not only poor academic performance; but also with a satisfactory number of credits and in good academic standing. In response, we put in place a number of strategies designed to address student success: intensive advising, early and expanded community offerings and expectations, first-year seminars, and expanded orientation. Despite the current economic climate, we've seen a general increase in retention, including first to second year persistence growing by 5.25% from AY09-09 to AY09-10.

Data drove our redesign of summer registration for entering first-year and transfer students. In the past, students have expressed frustration with the process, often finding courses of interest already closed or overenrolled. By consulting student feedback and NSSE data, we successfully enrolled students in four courses that mattered to them in terms of requirements, and placed them in the seminar of their choice. Students and parents ended up leaving campus happier and more connected to the college.

Emerging from the planning process were decisions concerning distinctive programs, faculty allocation, and physical improvements to academic spaces. A more detailed discussion of the particulars of this aspect of the process can be found on page 15.

As of September 30, 2010, we will conclude the final year of a \$1.8M Title III Strengthening Institutions grant, all of which was directed at facilitating student success. It allowed the College to do the following:

- Established the Office of First Year Experience, and hired its first director and two part time staff members to support first year programming and activities.
- Designed an array of first-year seminars, which are topical and varied, with as many as 12 different offerings each semester.
- Underwrote the expenses of our Common Reading Initiative, including buying the text for all incoming students. The grant also supported all programming related to the book.
- Provided matching funds to increase our endowment, allowing the college to better support students in financial need.

While the College must now support these efforts on its own, we're confident that our planning and the implementation of some of its points have put us in the position to do so.

Projection

As the College moves forward with further planning and evaluation, we look forward to the increasing visibility of faculty in the process. Presently, a working group is investigating ways to facilitate the timely progress to graduation, such as credit requirements in majors; the size and scope of our general education program; and the decompression of class scheduling. Future activities include an honors program and an expansion of online courses and low-residency options.

Recognizing that true planning is a circular activity that requires continual assessment and revision based on progress and changes in circumstance, the College is committed to annual evaluation and goal-setting. Each spring, the President's Council, in conjunction with the College Council and the Faculty Assembly, will evaluate progress on the annual strategies and projects. In all cases, annual strategies offer a ready avenue to ongoing assessment. For instance, sample Year One projects include: "A faculty working group will draft and present a proposed honors plan"; and to address our compressed academic schedule: "There will be a 10% improvement in course start times outside 'prime time' by Spring 2011."

Summary Statement

The College has acted on all of the commission's good recommendations, and we are determined to create an even stronger culture of planning and evaluation as we further implement our strategic plan.

Standard Three: Organization and Governance

Update

Johnson State College is one of the five colleges that comprise the Vermont State Colleges. There is a single Board of Trustees charged with oversight responsibilities for the system.

The president oversees three local bodies that plan and evaluate the work of the college: the President's Cabinet, which is composed of the college's three deans; the President's Council, whose membership includes deans, faculty, and administrative department heads; and the College Council, whose broad ranks are made up of union chairs, key administrative personnel, and student leaders.

The President's Council took on a very important function two years ago, when it agreed to serve as the steering group for the college's next multi-year strategic planning process. This work produced JSC 2010-2015: A Plan for Access, Engagement & Success, a document that will see an official launch at the start of the Fall 2010 semester. By serving as steering committee, the Council understood that it was assuming the role of oversight as well as direct contribution; but, it was well understood that while review and revision and final recommendation were the purview of the Council, council members were contributors alongside colleagues in individual working groups that make up the areas of focus of the plan. A detailed discussion of the work of the President's Council in its planning role is included in the Planning and Evaluation section of this report (please see page 16).

Another essential aspect of governance at Johnson State College is the Faculty Assembly, a group made up of the institution's full time faculty members (52, as of Fall 2010). The Faculty Council, elected by the assembly's membership, oversees the work of this body. The Chair of the Faculty Council also sits on the President's Council, and serves as liaison between the two groups. This connection has proven to be critical to the work of the College. Not only has it improved communication between the administration and the faculty, it has strengthened and deepened the involvement of faculty in our strategic planning efforts. Fruits of this collaboration include the creation of our First Year Seminar program; the Common Reading Initiative, a book-centered sequence of reading and related events for incoming students; and the Creative Audience, a menu plan of arts, sports, and academic events with required attendance standards.

Projection

One important product of the growing coordination between the administration and the faculty is the working group, elected by Faculty Assembly, focused on facilitating the timely progress of students towards graduation, namely the number of credits in majors and size and scope of the College's current General Education program. For greater detail, please see the goals of the College's strategic plan:

<http://www.jsc.edu/WhoWeAre/InitiativesAndReports/CollegePlan2010-15.aspx>

Involving the greater community in planning and evaluation is another important upcoming activity for the College. The president is convening a semi-annual roundtable of area business, government, education, and non-profit leaders to discuss topics of interest to the college and the community.

Summary Statement

All-campus planning has led to a more engaged shared governance at Johnson State College, with the implementation of the student success plan as the driver of the strategic plan as a whole.

Standard Four: The Academic Program

Update

- Early Student Success: JSC has focused on its Title III-supported goal of early (and ongoing) student success. A favorable external evaluation of the college's grant project concluded: "The site visit to Johnson State College in November 2008 [by Dr. Scott Coleman, Evergreen State College] yielded convincing evidence that the Title III project has been successfully implemented...[A]ll segments of the college community [have come] together, with the help of Title III resources, for the purpose of refocusing and energizing Johnston State College at this critical time for higher education." A variety of programs and activities, propelled by the research of scholars such as V. Tinto, R. Light, and G. Kuh, have been initiated and, just as importantly, institutionalized: among them, interdisciplinary first-year seminars, a Common Reading Initiative that continues through a semester-long series of varied programs and events tied to the reading, a public events component ("Creative Audience") in the general education curriculum for freshmen, initiatives to bring "academic affairs" (tutoring, advising, mini-lectures, international food and cultural events) into the first-year residence halls, professional development for advising, a Fulbright visiting specialist on campus and in classes, pre-registration for freshmen to insure an adequate schedule of necessary classes, and streamlined services for transfer students. Their outcome has contributed to a general increase in first-to-second year persistence, including a 5.25% increase registered fall 2009, when the poor economy might have predicted otherwise.
- Academic Program Reviews: The Vermont State Colleges' system of academic program reviews has undergone annual revision and improvement, including a new protocol this year to include more systematically "student voices" as part of each program review. The VSC system of program reviews was the subject of a presentation at the NEASC annual meeting in December, 2009, with JSC's academic dean among the three presenters. On its heels, the Davis Foundation invited a proposal, which has now been funded, on "Improving learning outcomes through system-wide program assessment." The two-year project should give Johnson and its sister VSC colleges the opportunity to address a number of remaining challenges and to enhance substantially an already well functioning protocol, toward a "model" system of academic program reviews.
- Assessment: Substantial progress has been made on program assessment. By now, with very few exceptions (see series E forms for blank cells), major programs publish their learning outcomes and possess strategies to gauge student mastery of them. It has been a hard road. Among the most effective steps has been the use of the twice-monthly meetings of the department chairs' council as an assessment workshop at which members present, and comment upon each other's, strategies. Success, however, has been partial. On the WASC rubric for assessing the quality of academic program learning outcomes, most of ours would be "emerging," rather than "developed" or "highly developed." Specific evidence of using assessment data to inform changes in teaching and learning remains scant. And attention to end-of-program assessment has not as yet been matched by the same level of attention to

student mastery at other stages. As for general education assessment, graduation standards have continued to be developed and have been implemented, as graduation requirements, in four areas: writing, quantitative reasoning, information literacy, and oral communication.

- **Academic Planning:** A comprehensive and far-reaching academic master plan (“Increase academic challenge and student achievement”) is the first priority of JSC 2010-2015: A Plan for Access, Engagement & Success. Other priorities (e.g., “Align campus and technology upgrades with academic priorities,” and “Strengthen JSC’s future through gifts, grants and investments”) are “enabling” goals, tied to the academic priorities of the institution and to the closely-aligned Priority #2: “Foster early and ongoing student success.”
- **Culture of Research and Extended Classroom Experiences:** An ongoing cultural shift is drawing more and more students (and faculty) into research activities. Environmental & Health Science Department faculty and students have been studying the health of the Lamoille Valley watershed, where the college is located. The trend has extended to the Department of Behavioral Sciences. On the strength of their participation in this emerging culture of research, both Professors Gina Mireault and Elizabeth Dolci (the latter, chair of E&HS) have been designated VSC Faculty Fellows. The focus on research is part of a college-wide emphasis on high quality experiential learning—learning beyond the classroom—as a complement to classroom-based learning. Research shows that complementary, experiential education is a powerful tool to support student persistence and success. JSC’s first annual showcase event to celebrate “extended classroom experiences” took place in April, 2007, has been growing since, with student research at the center of the various displays and presentations.
- **Institutional Research:** We have worked to increase our capacity to generate, analyze and interpret, and display relevant data, particularly related to student retention and success. The college Registrar and lead institutional researcher, Doug Eastman, has participated in several professional development activities, supported by Title III funding. Grant funding has also supported membership in a Boston-based educational research consortium, Eduventures, to whose staff we have “outsourced” several projects on student retention and other academic priorities.
- **Personnel:** Despite the economic challenges, the College has continued to invest in renewing its faculty ranks. During AY 2009-2010 five new faculty members were hired, representing nearly 10% of the entire full-time faculty. Two hires took place in 2008-2009, 2 in 2007-2008, 4 in 2006-2007, and five occurred during 2005-2006. Despite (or perhaps because of) demographic trends and economic stringency in the state and region, this continued commitment to academic priorities has represented a sharpening of the institution’s core mission, especially to educate Vermonters. In part to balance these investments, in 2010 the College made the difficult decision to close a high quality child development center, which was not tied to an academic department or program.

Projection

From the above it seems clear that JSC will need to focus on program assessment and on the implementation and ongoing evaluation of its ambitious academic plan. The latter will include streamlining major programs and revising the general education core curriculum. The plan, which has widespread faculty (and staff) support, helps ensure that the core priorities of our Title III grant project—early and ongoing student success—will remain at the center of college life and thinking for many years to come.

Summary Statement

Johnson State College substantially meets the Commission's Standard Four: The Academic Program.

Standard Four: External Degree Program and Electronically Offered Degree Programs

Update:

Since JSC's full NEASC review in 2005, the External Degree Program (EDP), which offers an alternative path to a bachelor's degree for adult learners throughout Vermont, has expanded its programming. In Spring 2010, 574 students were enrolled in the EDP, an increase of 21% over 2005. The number of courses offered off campus, either online or on weekends, has increased by 20% to 85 per semester.

Almost all the courses run by EDP are taught by part-time faculty, many of whom are veteran faculty who have been teaching for the college for more than 10 years. As programming has expanded, new faculty members have been hired. In each case, approval is sought from the chairperson of the appropriate academic department on campus.

In 2006, a full-time, tenure-track faculty member in Education was hired with the assignment to serve half on campus, half in EDP, and to serve as a liaison between the campus and off-campus programs. This hybrid appointment was a first in the College's history and has helped the campus and EDP to align and enhance programming for Education students, which is particularly important because of complex state teaching licensure requirements. In addition, an Education/EDP Steering Committee was formed and has met regularly to discuss and deal with issues affecting EDP Education students.

The number of online courses has increased. They now represent half of the EDP's course offerings. A new position, the Coordinator of Online Learning and Services, was added in 2008 to provide more intensive support and training for faculty and students, especially faculty, in online courses. This person trains faculty who are new to online learning and helps veteran online instructors to improve their course design.

In Spring 2010, the College sought, and was granted, approval from NEASC to offer four majors more than 50% online. Accordingly, the B.A. in Business Management and the B.A. in Professional Studies will be offered fully online starting in Fall 2010. More than 50% of two other majors, the B.A. in Liberal Arts and the B.A. in Psychology, can also be completed online. All four of these majors continue to be available off campus in a classroom-based weekend format or, as many students prefer, in a combination of online and classroom courses.

Only a few changes have taken place in online programming in the few months since the College received NEASC's approval for online degrees. Ten more online courses have been planned for Fall 2010. The College will take on funding of the EDP's coordinator of online learning and services. The position has been grant-funded through Title III until now.

Other changes are in the development stage. Work is under way to expand and improve online services, especially: electronic program evaluation so that students and advisors can know easily which degree requirements have been met and which remain to be completed; use of Image Now, an online imaging software that will give advisors off campus immediate access to transfer transcripts and other documents. The transfer credit evaluation process is being overhauled to

give transfer students better service concerning how their transfer credits can be used toward degree requirements.

Services from the library, the Registrar's Office, Financial Aid Office, Business Office, bookstore, and some Academic Support Services are available through a combination of online tools, by email, and by phone. Course bulletins and the College catalog have been put online and have been well received. An online writing workshop has been added. Orientation for new students now takes place online. Most students now apply to the program through an online application.

The partnership between JSC and the Community College of Vermont (CCV), our sister college in the Vermont State Colleges, to deliver advising services for EDP students at 12 locations statewide continues to be a key factor in the success of EDP. Three advisors have been added since 2005 to handle increased enrollment in particular areas of the state, while one site lost an advisor and is now served by an advisor from an adjacent site. Online advising tools have been gradually expanded.

For Education students seeking teaching licensure, resources offered off campus and online have been expanded. Professional development seminars for student teachers are now offered every few weeks at two off-campus locations. Information sessions for students with the chairperson of Education and other faculty are now held four times per year over Vermont Interactive Television so that students can attend in their own communities.

Learning outcomes have been articulated and published for all the majors offered through the EDP. Work continues on program assessment plans. Procedures for meeting the VSC's four graduation standards have been put in place for all EDP students, with work continuing on the quantitative reasoning standard.

Projections:

In the next five years, the External Degree Program expects to grow at an even faster pace than it has during the past five years. This coming year, two fully online degree programs will be launched. Several grant proposals have just been submitted with the aim of attracting and serving more adults with college credits but no degree. Based on last year and enrollment to date for Fall 2010, and even if the grants are not awarded, a growth rate for EDP of 5%-10% per year for the next few years would be a conservative projection.

In light of the expected growth, the College intends to begin a planning effort to analyze EDP's programming and finances in relation to allocation of resources and future needs. A program of support and evaluation for part-time faculty teaching statewide and online will be a high priority in the coming year. The EDP benefits from having a veteran part-time faculty that receives strong support from the program's co-directors and online coordinator, but especially because of expected growth, more formal and comprehensive systems are needed.

A new learning management system (LMS) for online courses and support of classroom courses will be in use by summer, 2011. The new LMS (Moodle) will offer new possibilities for online course delivery and pose new challenges for training and support of faculty and students.

A new online portal and content management system for the whole Vermont State Colleges System will also be in place in 2011. As with the LMS, these tools will offer improved access for students and faculty to online information and will have a big impact on EDP programming, both online and at sites statewide.

A marketing campaign for online programming will be developed. Online services will be expanded, especially in the areas of transfer evaluation service, online degree program evaluation. Discussions will be under way to expand services from IT for online support, Business Office, Financial Aid Office, Registrar, library, and Academic Support Services for online delivery and availability of service in the evenings and on weekends.

Significant changes in the College's Education curriculum are planned, with a resulting impact on the EDP. Education majors account for approximately 1/5 of EDP enrollment. The role of the joint EDP/EDU faculty member, EDP/EDU Steering Committee, and off-campus co-curricular activities will continue to be crucial.

The number of advisors will need to be expanded, or current advisors freed up to take on more students, as enrollment grows. Close, intensive advising at 12 sites of the Community College of Vermont is a key to EDP's success and is reflected in the relatively high persistence and graduation rates (73% and 61%, respectively, in 2009) of EDP students. Further development of program assessment plans and activities is slated for coming semesters, especially for the B.A. in Professional Studies, an individualized degree program available only through the EDP.

Efforts will be expanded to work directly with employers in Vermont to see if the EDP can serve employees either on site or through EDP's regular weekend and online programming. In the College's new five-year strategic plan about to be publicized, transfer students are identified as a group that will receive focused attention – with its own needs and special character. As all EDP students are transfer students (entering with at least 60 credits), the EDP expects to play an important role in this effort and expects its students to benefit greatly.

Summary Statement

Johnson State College substantially meets the Commission's Standard Four: The Academic Program for distance and electronically offered degree programs.

Standard Five: Faculty

Update

Since FY 2007, the number of faculty at the College has dropped slightly in response to departures, retirements, enrollment trends, and the College's strategic plan. From 55 full-time and 142 part-time faculty in FY 2007, JSC expects to have 52 full-time and 112 part-time faculty on campus in FY 2011. At the same time, the College has made a conscious decision, made explicit in "JSC 2010-2015 A Plan for Access, Engagement & Success," to invest resources for faculty in signature programs without ignoring the needs of other important programs. For the coming year, for example, JSC has hired five full-time faculty members: two in education, and one each in music, digital media, and creative writing – all of which are key programs at the college. A more extensive orientation program than in the past is being planned for the incoming group of five faculty members, whose number represents nearly 10% of the total full-time faculty.

The College has set a goal to develop a stronger culture of research for faculty and students. Well-publicized research projects by faculty in Behavioral Sciences (concerning the development of humor in babies) and in Environmental and Health Sciences (involving water resources) have been funded by multiple grants from the Vermont Genetics Network. Additional grant proposals are being submitted to a variety of funding sources to expand the number of research projects conducted by faculty and students working together.

While the number of part-time faculty members has declined in recent years, they play a crucial role in delivering the academic program of the college. In recognition of this fact and in keeping with the collective bargaining agreement, the system of evaluation and support for part-time faculty has been more fully developed. New part-time faculty receive classroom visits and formal evaluations at least twice during their first semesters and once every four years after becoming eligible for the part-time faculty union. A Peer Review Committee reviews a portfolio prepared by the faculty member, student evaluations, and reports of classroom visits. An Excellence in Teaching award has also been created to acknowledge, at Honors Convocation, not only the work of an outstanding part-time faculty member but the important contributions of all part-time faculty.

Continuing growth in the External Degree Program has meant that a substantial number of part-time faculty (66 in F 2009) teach off campus and online. Training and support for these faculty members has been expanded, in particular through a new position, the Coordinator of Online Learning and Services, which was originally funded by Title III but now is part of the institutional budget. This individual works extensively with faculty members on and off campus, but especially with faculty in EDP who are teaching online or in Internet-supported weekend courses off campus.

Particularly in the complex area of teaching licensure, EDP faculty have worked with full-time faculty to ensure that off-campus programs meet the same objectives for students as those on campus. A full-time faculty member was added in the Education Department with the assignment to teach in EDP and on campus, and to serve as liaison between off-campus and on-

campus programs. Two focused retreats brought together the full-time and part-time faculty, on campus and in EDP, to align course syllabi and overall objectives.

Projection

In keeping with the College's new strategic plan, a multi-year faculty recruitment and replacement plan, with fully articulated budget implications, will be developed over the coming year. The plan will reflect institutional priorities with the over-arching goal of fostering students' success at every level. All new faculty hires will commit to this goal, and all components of the search process will be designed to gauge that commitment. The recruitment plan will also reflect the College's intent to invest in signature programs without sacrificing the breadth of programming that contributes to JSC's identity as a liberal arts college. JSC will continue to build a culture of research for faculty and students. Opportunities for faculty and students to work together on undergraduate research will expand program by program, department by department.

Professional development for faculty in the area of advising will receive focused attention in coming years. The College will develop, adopt and pilot an advising-evaluation tool. JSC will also expand orientation for new, full-time faculty members to include a separate advising component and will provide ongoing professional development for all advisors. The External Degree Program will develop a program of faculty support and evaluation similar to that provided for part-time faculty on campus. It will also add to its existing efforts of training and support for individual faculty members by developing group trainings, online and in person, and by developing web-based materials for use by faculty statewide.

Summary Statement:

Based on a well-articulated strategic plan, JSC is making careful choices in a climate of necessary fiscal restraint to support faculty and enhance programs while keeping the focus on its stated objectives of access, engagement, and success for all students.

Standard Six: Students

Update

JSC is meeting the Vermont State College's mission of serving Vermonters through a stable campus-based student population and, notably, through the growth of the External Degree Program (EDP), which serves students in communities around the state. Formalized articulation agreements with area high schools allow secondary students to take JSC courses while still in high school.

In terms of the College's own mission, we continue to offer broad access admissions, and we are following the guidelines of our strategic plan to facilitate the success of all students, particularly those who transfer from other institutions. Recent examples of these efforts include the piloting of a transfer student orientation day, the purchase of Transfer Evaluation System (TES) software, and the establishment of a related transfer website, which can be found here:

<http://www.jsc.edu/AdmissionsAndAid/TransferStudents/default.aspx>

An even more significant development of the past five years is the creation of the Office of First-Year Experience (FYE), which reports to the Academic Dean and the Dean of Students. Major initiatives stemming from this department include a growing series of first-year seminars, courses capped at 15 students that are exclusively the domain of students new to the college; a graduation requirement called the "Creative Audience" which requires student attendance at a number of co-curricular campus events; and an enhanced new student orientation highlighted by a common book experience. In addition to a common text for all incoming students, the initiative also includes guest speakers and related cultural events.

As the result of these efforts, first to second year student retention rates have improved in the past year by 5.25%. The College has contracted with Eduventures, an educational research firm, to help better understand how persistence rates relate to NSSE responses. A recent initiative is the implementation of pre-registration for incoming first semester first-year students based on declared major, if any, and a survey of academic interests.

Major campus renovations have been driven by student input, which were then folded into the College's strategic planning. The first two capital projects realized as part of the campus master plan were the transformation of Stearns Hall to create a student center and the renovation of SHAPE, the athletics and recreation facility. Both projects were rated as high priorities by students and had student participation in the programmatic design stages. Both buildings have subsequently seen increases in student usage.

In addition to modernizing living quarters, residence hall improvements include the addition of computer laboratories and exercise equipment. On-site tutoring services and expanded programming are now offered in the first-year residence hall. Each of the last five years has seen higher residency numbers than the prior year; driven, in part, by the increasing number of returning students choosing to live on campus. To accommodate these higher numbers, an area in a mixed use building previously used for administrative functions was converted into a floor

of residential rooms. A campus-based residence life professional was added to the staff to meet the needs of this population.

There have been substantial upgrades in campus safety measures in the past five years. An additional public safety officer was added to the staff. An emergency notification system and extensive safety equipment, including cameras, locking systems, blue lights, and lighting were implemented. A College Crisis Response Team (CCRT) was established to review and drill emergency protocols and procedures.

Counseling and health services have moved and now form a co-located wellness center with a shared entrance and reception area. Two part-time counselors, one a certified alcohol and drug specialist, have been added to the staff. Drug and alcohol outreach and education efforts have been informed by the College's participation in the national CORE survey, culminating in a social marketing campaign.

A Vermont State Colleges (VSC) records retention policy has been established, and JSC has implemented a web based FERPA release authorization form with secure access codes.

Projection

As the college moves forward, it will consider an honors program, the design of which is under discussion. We do know that it will not be defined solely by credentials at the time of admission, in keeping with the College's access mission. The College also expects to see a continued increase in the EDP population, particularly with the advent of the recently approved on-line degree options. To facilitate degree completion, the EDP transfer process will be revised to reduce steps. Other initiatives include the development of formal articulation agreements with specific community colleges, and the creation of transfer credit evaluation guidelines, informed by TES. The college also wants to extend FYE programming to second year and transfer students, as one of the building blocks leading to the establishment of academic learning communities. Data gleaned from Eduventures will inform retention efforts, and guide us to our goal of 75% first to second year retention within the next five years.

Departments are building on work already underway, consistent with the College Plan. This plan will drive divisional assessment efforts. In response to changing student demographics and needs, on-line tutoring will be expanded. Public Safety plans to regularly assess and upgrade programs and equipment. The College will again participate in the CORE survey and plans more social marketing campaigns to combat problematic drinking. It is expected that there will be an increase in the number of weekly hours of professional coverage in the counseling center.

Summary Statement

JSC is well positioned to serve a rapidly changing student population by regularly and methodically working to identify, plan for, and meet its needs and expectations.

Standard Seven: Library and Other Information Resources

Update

The Johnson State College Library serves a diverse student population enrolled in on-campus undergraduate and graduate programs; non-residential, off-campus programs; and a variety of online courses and majors.

At the time of the College's last NEASC accreditation, the visiting committee shared the following concerns and recommendations about the Library:

- 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 ... is a challenge. Staff ... 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.
- 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.
- To fully support the College's goals and play a more active role in supporting student learning outcomes, library ... 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.
- There is a need for greater faculty participation in collection development – including selection and currency of materials, required resources, and medium.

In the intervening years, the College has instituted an annual budget review, a process that has accommodated steady growth in library budgets, even during periods of relative fiscal hardship. This increase has allowed the library to expand its online offerings, including databases and electronic books; maintain its current hard copy print collections; and add monographs and multimedia resources related to First Year Seminars.

Staffing, however, remains an issue, a situation exacerbated by contractual release time for library staff members serving in union officer positions. While the Library has hired a cataloger with collection development responsibilities, it still has a need for a reference librarian who can be dedicated to handling our social media reference outreach, share information literacy teaching responsibilities, and assist with collection development. Despite being an early adopter of instant

messaging, Facebook, and Twitter as possible avenues for librarian/student interaction, the library sees little use of these tools by our student body. Our on-campus population clearly prefers in-person interaction, while our off-campus patrons, who tend to be older than their campus counterparts, favor the telephone and, to a lesser extent, email to resolve research issues.

The College has made significant progress in establishing a coherent information literacy assessment program. For example, successful passage of the College's online information literacy tutorial is now a condition for graduation, a reasonable first step in assessing baseline research knowledge. The College has pushed to include information literacy instruction as an essential component of its First Year Seminars, and librarians are working with faculty to develop curriculum maps for their disciplines, the goal of which is to shape the research needs of students as they move towards graduation. The College also has created a teaching space within the library for information literacy instruction. While there remains much to be done, library staff are heartened by the widening campus conversation about information literacy and how best to teach and assess these skills.

This process has deepened the faculty's involvement with collection development, as has the creation of First Year Seminars. As a result, the Library has seen a growing number of requests for materials, as well as an increasing awareness of the role digital resources play in both the undergraduate and graduate curricula.

Projection

As the Library moves forward in the coming years to support the initiatives of the College's strategic plan, it will focus its energies on the following:

- Information literacy instruction and assessment. This will always be a crucial area for the Library, and it is our commitment to continually refine our strategies when it comes to preparing our students to think critically about information. The major focus of the Library's efforts on this front is two-fold: the construction of departmental curriculum maps and a revision of our online information literacy tutorial.
- Collection development: In addition to our ongoing outreach efforts with faculty, the Library is concentrating on two other fronts concerning the strength and relevance of its collections. First, the Library is in the third year of an extensive deaccessioning project related to our monograph collection. It's in our students' best interest to have 100,000 relevant and current books in its library, as opposed to 120,000 old and irrelevant ones. Second, the Library will vigorously expand our digital holdings, with particular attention paid to reference titles and full-text databases. Consortial efforts within the Vermont State Colleges and the Vermont Department of Libraries have enabled the library to add resources that would have been beyond its financial grasp, and discussions to do the same with private colleges within the state are becoming more frequent and specific.
- Outreach: Providing students with a variety of ways to receive assistance remains a priority. In addition to promoting our existing Web 2.0 tools, the library will continue

to test and adopt emerging technologies that promise to enhance communication and further research fluency.

Summary Statement

The Library continuously evaluates the efficacy of its services, the quality of its collections, and the ease of accessing its services.

Standard Eight: Physical and Technological Resources

Update

Johnson State College has invested heavily in its physical and technological resources since 2005. Since that time, over \$11.3M has been invested in facilities, with an additional \$.9M invested in technology from desktops, to servers, to an entirely new web presence. Over the next five years, the College expects to spend an additional \$6.3M on academic building renovations and deferred maintenance, and will spend approximately \$.5M on technology enhancements. These investments were guided by the college's Facilities Master Plan, which was approved in 2006. The plan launched an aggressive construction and renovation program. Its key projects included:

- Complete renovation of Stearns Hall from a dining services building to student center. Among its features: modernized cooking and dining facilities; a 38-seat movie theater; performance spaces; very visible student government offices (which have helped to increase participation); SERVE, our service learning office; WJSC, the college radio station; a café; a game room; and a community gathering space.
- Renovation of SHAPE Athletic Building. This renovation included the creation of a first floor fitness center; a spinning studio; group exercise rooms; a new gymnasium designed specifically for basketball; classrooms; and community gathering spaces.
- Renovation of Bentley Hall, Phase One. Upgrades to Bentley, the college's sciences building, include a molecular biology lab; a student research lab; and improved classrooms and offices.
- Residence Hall renovations, including complete upgrades to the restroom facilities in Governor, Senator, and Martinetti Halls. In addition, 20 new residential beds were added to Martinetti Hall by converting classrooms to residential space.
- Renovation of Martinetti Hall administrative spaces to increase efficiency and effectiveness of departments.
- Master planning for academic renovations in the Visual Arts Center and Bentley Hall in preparation for upcoming construction.

Throughout the renovation process, the College has worked closely with architects and engineers to ensure that the projects meet the functional needs of the occupants; that construction is completed cost-effectively; and that the college fulfills its legal obligations. In addition, the College continues to work side-by-side with the VSC Director of Facilities to keep the VSC board of trustees apprised of the on-going work.

Another project that emerged from the College's Facilities Master Plan was the updating and conversion of classroom furniture to meet the needs of today's students. Since 2005, the College has actively converted classroom furnishings from tablet-style chairs to individual workspaces for students or seminar-style tables and chairs. This conversion, which is approximately 70% complete, will continue for the next three years.

The College continues to improve its approach to facilities planning, including building-specific master plans that allow the college to implement the most cost-effective and efficient projects. Recently, the College completed a master plan for Bentley Hall, and expects to complete a

master plan for the Visual Arts Center in early fall of this year, projects that have received capital funding from the state of Vermont.. The results of these plans will serve as the foundation for renovations to each building over the next three years.

Technological improvements have been largely dictated by the needs of the faculty in the classroom, as well as the needs driven by our administrative software. In addition to scheduled enhancements to technology in the classroom, the College has recently created a digital arts classroom/laboratory to support the curriculum of our Fine and Performing Arts program.

Projection

Over the next 18 months, the College will embark on a technology master planning exercise that will identify major improvements required to meet the college's technology needs now and into the future. This effort will allow the College to invest strategically in technology that supports both academic and administrative functions.

Summary Statement

The College has determined infrastructure and technological upgrades through planning and the use of data. There is institutional agreement that technology and physical infrastructure are essential to helping the college realize its core educational mission.

Standard Nine: Financial Resources

Update

Despite modest continued support from the state of Vermont and a lower-than-requested tuition increase, Johnson State College continues to maintain a strong financial position. In FY2009, the college's most recently audited fiscal year, the College saw an increase in full paying equivalents (FPE) for all enrollment categories when compared to the prior year, with the exception of in-state graduate enrollment. The net effect of this FPE increase and planned tuition increase was an increase of \$1.6M, or 6% better than budget. At the same time, actual expenses increased only 2% year over year. The net effect was an increase in unrestricted net assets of approximately \$622K at the close of FY2009 (excluding GASB45).

Since 2005, budgeting processes have been changed to reflect the College's strategic priorities. Budget managers are now required to submit budgets annually to the controller's office. The budget must include a narrative that describes the specific needs of the department and how the funding applied to their department will advance the strategic goals of the college. In addition, departments are invited each year to request funding for special projects that will advance the college's mission. Projects funded in the last year included the renovation of the 24-hour study room; the addition of new locking systems to all academic buildings; and approximately \$125K in new scientific equipment.

In 2007 the VSC borrowed \$72M for capital construction. Of this, Johnson State College received \$9.5M to fund several key projects, including the renovation of Stearns Hall, the SHAPE facility, and the first stage of upgrades to Bentley Hall. These projects were funded and completed in 2008, 2009 and 2010. We anticipate that these monies will be fully spent by spring 2011. An additional loan of \$4.5M is currently under consideration. This funding will be used to complete renovations to Bentley Hall and the Visual Arts Center.

The College has been conservative in its borrowing strategy. By developing a thorough master plan, and spending money wisely, the College has been able to make significant strides in facilities improvements, with important new investments planned over the next several years. Total debt service for all projects is expected to be, approximately, \$670K annually. The total debt service is largely covered by a new student fee.

As part of its facilities plan, the College continues to focus on deferred maintenance of its buildings. To off-set this cost, the Vermont State College added an amount equivalent to \$100 per residential student per semester in 2006. This "deferred maintenance fund" is used to cover costs associated with residential halls. It should be noted that, since 2005, nearly all state capital funding has been dedicated to deferred maintenance.

Projection

The College's new plan (<http://www.jsc.edu/WhoWeAre/InitiativesAndReports/CollegePlan2010-15.aspx>) is even more

explicit about the alignment of budgets to strategic planning priorities. During the next budgeting cycle, the focus will remain on the goals of departments and funding them in accordance to the strategic plan.

Summary Statement

The College has instituted sound budgetary practices that allow the institution to meet its mission.

Standard 10: Public Disclosure

Update

The College has significantly improved its use of electronic and print media to provide accurate, valuable content to the public and to the JSC community. It established, in September 2009, the Office of College Communications to oversee external and internal communications, public relations, college publications and marketing materials, and the ever-evolving JSC website at www.jsc.edu. The goal of this office is to streamline information dissemination to the public as well as to JSC faculty and staff, to ensure that accurate and complete news about JSC reaches the media in a timely manner, and to establish a central location where the public and members of the JSC community can turn for accurate information.

Our website (and website usage, as documented by Google Analytics) has grown significantly. Despite staffing limitations, we have succeeded in keeping our web content up to date and adding new materials as they become available. In addition, we have maintained a regular schedule of email newsletters to faculty and staff from the College President, which are posted online (in blog format) and open to comments.

As well, we have employed an online system to resolve one of the thorniest issues we were struggling with at the time of our last accreditation report: publishing an accurate and up-to-date College catalog on time and on budget. In 2009 we transitioned to an online catalog service that allows us to easily maintain current, accurate catalog information and course descriptions in a single, central location, eliminating the problems inherent in our previous, decentralized system. In addition to providing this searchable online catalog, the service provides the ability to cost-effectively publish printed catalogs using the web-based content. Following the initial implementation expense associated with this system, printed catalogs will be much more economical to produce each year.

Our ongoing challenge is to keep pace with Internet technology and make full use of the latest technological tools as they become available. We are utilizing Facebook, Blogger, Flickr and other social-media sites to provide up-to-the-minute news about programs and events at the College, but there are additional steps we can take – such as having students create blogs that provide their perspective on their college experience at JSC – to make the information more “real” to the reader.

In addition, as we increasingly look to the Internet and online tools to serve as our major vehicles of communication, we must take special care to ensure that the quest to be “timely” does not take precedence over maintaining standards of accuracy, thoroughness and ease of access.

As much as the College is focusing on the digital dissemination of information, we continue to publish hard copy magazines, newsletters, and handbooks for the college and greater communities. These publications include:

- Student Handbook of Rights and Responsibilities, provided to each student at Orientation.
- Uniform Campus Crime Report, which is also available at: www.jsc.edu/OfficesAndServices/PublicSafety/CampusCrimeStatistics.
- Johnson Views, our annual alumni magazine.
- JSC Arts & Events Calendar, which is produced each semester.
- Admissions recruitment materials, which include search pieces, viewbook-type publications for the college as a whole, and brochures focusing on specific aspects of JSC (e.g., athletics, academics, student life) as well as each academic department its associated majors.
- Program- and service-specific brochures for a variety of campus departments.
- Student-produced content, which include our biweekly student newspaper, Basement Medicine, and the student-edited literary journal Gihon Review.

Projection

Johnson State College will continue to expand its use of online communications tools to disseminate information about the College to all constituencies. Data related to graduation rates, student retention and other performance indicators are and will remain an important component (<http://www.jsc.edu/WhoWeAre/InitiativesAndReports/NEASC/Retention/VSCPerformanceIndicators09-10AY05-18-10.pdf>). The public increasingly will come to expect this information – and expect to find it easily. It will be our responsibility to provide it in a clear and easily accessible (and understandable) format. When and where we fall short, we will be expected not only to acknowledge it and outline the corrective action planned, but to regularly report on our progress.

Similarly, we will expand the use of online video to document “the way things are” at Johnson State. This and other online content (e.g., blogs) will increasingly be produced by students, for students. The Office of College Communications is making plans to incorporate student content into key sections of the JSC website. We are developing a policy designed to promote free and open expression while ensuring adherence to standards of accuracy and appropriateness.

JSC is fully committed to (and involved in the planning of) VSC’s “Project 2011,” a revamped Internet portal slated to go online in summer 2011. This will make it possible to provide highly targeted information based on constituency (e.g., residential vs. commuting students; students by major; etc.), which will have the dual benefit of ensuring that the right information goes to the right person, while increasing the likelihood that the person receiving the information will actually tune into it instead of ignore it. More than ever, it will be imperative that College communications are timely and relevant.

Summary Statement

Johnson State College is committed to providing comprehensive, accurate information about all aspects of its operations.

Standard 11: Integrity

Update

The College's Policies & Procedures Manual was revised in 2008 and is readily accessible online. It can be found here:

<http://www.jsc.edu/FacultyAndStaff/PoliciesAndProcedures/0809PoliciesAndProcedures.pdf>

The College hosts a training each year for faculty and staff about the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act in an effort to ensure our compliance with this law at every level. Furthermore, Vermont State Colleges personnel policies are outlined in a manual available online and provided to each employee at the time of hire. In addition, collective-bargaining agreements clearly enumerate the policies pertaining to JSC faculty and staff. The VSC has clear policies regarding sexual harassment, unprofessional behavior, responsible computer use, protection for "whistleblowers," hazing and other timely issues. These documents are available at:

https://ganymede.ccv.vsc.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp?tab_id= 236 1

With the formation of the Office of College Communications in 2009, Johnson State College has made a concerted effort to improve and simplify communications between the institution's various constituencies. News about College developments and events is disseminated as it happens – on our website and intranet portal and through our publications, email communications, and press releases.

In addition, the President convened occasional meetings of the JSC community and others to discuss important items. These included the President's annual "State of the College" address; appearances by executive officers before faculty and student groups; and an annual legislative breakfast attended by government, business and community leaders. The College hosted one of the monthly meetings of the VSC Board of Trustees, which was open to the general public as well as members of the JSC community. The college does this annually. The president also issued a bi-weekly online newsletter during the academic year to the entire college community.

The College's online catalog service, implemented in 2009, has significantly improved our ability to produce timely annual catalogs, online and in print, with accurate and up-to-date information:

<http://www.jsc.edu/Academics/CourseCatalogues/default.aspx>

Projection

Transparency and openness at JSC will improve dramatically when the new "Project 2011" intranet portal goes live during the summer of 2010. Renewed effort is being put into collecting

relevant content and making it obvious and easily accessible to JSC faculty, staff, and students. For those outside the JSC community, including prospective students and their families, they will see an enhanced public website, which will include the creation of a sub-site that will detail the total cost of education. This information will include the availability of financial aid and the typical length of time to degree completion, the average debt load of students upon graduation, and similar data.

Summary Statement

Johnson State College is committed to full and open communication with students, faculty, staff and the outside community. Our policies and procedures are easily accessible online and in printed form, and JSC staff are always available to talk or meet personally people who call or walk in. We strive to make our institution as transparent as possible.

Plans

The new College Plan, **JSC 2010-2015: A Plan for Access, Engagement, and Success**, provides an excellent framework to discuss the future of Johnson State College.

The entire process of planning was one of deliberation and dialogue as befits the scope of an ambitious activity that extends five years forward. The title, for example, had us in conversation about its key elements: access, engagement and success. How to order them? We decided, after we named our focus areas, that while all three parts are critical and interrelated, they are sequential. A brief mention of each sets the stage for looking ahead to 2015 and the issues and initiatives before us.

Within our commitment to “access” rests our keen awareness of what it means to design an educational experience with meaningful points of entry and a commitment to broad access that recognizes diverse starting places; geographic and financial challenges; and the lives of adult and young adult students. We also are committed to knowing deeply and articulating what we value about a Johnson State College education so that we can speak knowledgeably about the expectations we hold for our students; the supports we will be able to offer students to meet these expectations; and the entering skills and interests of potential students to thrive at Johnson State College as we chart the crucial balance of high standards and strong supports.

By articulating “engagement” as a key part of our plan, we recommit to our mission —that education relies on mutual involvement of teachers and learners in an important common enterprise. Further, that the involvement we seek and commit to provide reaches well beyond the classroom—face-to-face or online—“to the field, the laboratory, the studio, the community, and the local and wider world,” as we say in our mission statement. We also acknowledge, within the concept of engagement, the importance of college faculty and staff working together to actively assess our own work and planning, making revisions and adjustments as needed, and continuing to challenge artificial barriers to our own success wherever we need to do so. Active engagement, as well, requires that we make our resource decisions in a climate of dialogue so that our precious resource dollars—programmatic as well as capital—are allocated across the College in support of identified projects and toward common goals.

“Success” is the word that carries the most weight in our plan’s title. We acknowledge the great responsibilities that we assume in accepting students to our College and into our degree programs. Their success as evaluated by the progress they make in meeting their goals is something that we cannot guarantee; but every year we have gotten wiser and more fiercely committed to identifying the elements that contribute positively to student success and degree progress. We have made resource and staffing decisions in support of our new goals and with keen awareness of the trust and money students invest in us and their educations.

Our work ahead during the life of **JSC 2010-2015: A Plan for Access, Engagement & Success** will rest on the key elements and responsibilities that it embodies. The plan will serve as our guiding document as we address the issues ahead of us and the initiatives we undertake with confidence and commitment to future of Johnson State College and our students over the next five years. These initiatives and areas of focus include:

1. Focusing on enrollment planning as crucial to the fiscal and academic well-being of the College.

Our stated priority in our plan, “Identify and enroll students most likely to thrive and succeed at Johnson State College,” is shored up by a series of outcomes and indicators, as well as strategies and projects for year #1:

http://www.jsc.edu/WhoWeAre/InitiativesAndReports/PDFS/2010/COLLEGE_PLAN_07-01-10.pdf

As well, an enrollment sub-plan in its draft stage, the product of a cross-college task force led by our registrar (who serves as de facto director of institutional research) and our associate dean of enrollment, will resume their work Fall 2010. Their projects include—among many others -- the identification of quantitative as well as qualitative predictors of a good enrollment match with JSC; retention of students in all majors; influence of residential life on retention; and progress of Vermont students compared to out-of-state students.

A key consideration of enrollment management at Johnson State is a focus on transfer students. Too often, we assume that transfer students already know their way around a college, having been to a new student orientation somewhere in the past. We are making the assumption that transfer students are new to our college at this point in time and in their lives, new to the degree requirements, the mores and community expectations. Focused attention to incoming transfer students will be a point of distinction in our enrollment planning for both our on-campus transfer students and those students who enter our B.A. degree completion program through the External Degree Program. This population not only deserves our attention as a very promising group of degree aspirants, but also as a population that Johnson State College has a reputation for serving well.

As the state’s contribution to our budget (18%) is not likely to increase in the next five years and as our Trustees adopt a constrained stance in setting tuition for Vermont students, successful enrollment and retention strategies will be crucial to a secure future. This fiscal reality underscores our commitment to serious and sustained attention to enrollment and retention.

2. Committing to student success--both “early and ongoing”—as a major college priority over the next five years.

Johnson State College will successfully complete a Title III Strengthening Institutions Grant on September 30, 2010. The problem that we proposed to address at the front end of this five-year grant was the early departure of too many students after their first year. We resolved to study this problem deeply and to design strategies to intervene and reverse early exits by both under-performing as well as high-performing students. And, perhaps of even greater importance, we committed to assessing and revising our strategies along the way. We have had some victories. Our first to second year retention when last measured (2008 over 2007 for first time full time freshmen) had improved by 5.25%; while it is premature to state the reasons for this promising

change, we believe our increased attention to advising; the introduction of first year seminars; and the stronger involvement of faculty members are among the contributors.

We have learned that ongoing student success is a long-term project and needs constant attention and course correction. And, similar to our commitment to transfer students, we must now apply the lessons learned in working with entering first-year students to sophomores. After that, we need to build until all the years of a student's college career are characterized by strategies and academic challenges that fit their increased knowledge and skills sets, as well as emerging goals.

3. Balancing engagement and support.

Because we designed our all-College plan to be, first and foremost, an academic plan, our first priority is to “Increase academic challenge and student achievement.” We have come to learn over the life of our Title III grant that challenge and high standards must be accompanied by meaningful supports. These range from articulating clearly and early what our expectations are, as well as naming the resources to assist students along the way. Strong endorsement from faculty is crucial and necessary; and, we are pleased that our faculty members have endorsed the multi-year plan we will launch in Fall 2010, acknowledging that it requires their creative and sustained commitment.

Among the strategies we have put in place and will build from are a continuation and expansion of our now well-established office of first year success; co-enrollment for entering students so students will early on have access to colleague students; and increased expectations for students beyond the classroom.

Of particular note is the expanding “culture of research” that we are establishing at Johnson State College. Six of our professors in the physical and social sciences are actively engaged in research projects with their students. Students are meaningful partners, who are given full credit for their participation and who represent themselves and the college at area and national forums. A notable example would be our environmental sciences faculty, who have committed to a department-wide research project studying the local watershed. Not only are these faculty members performing research alongside their students, they are also demonstrating the potential that local research has to affect the quality of life of citizens in our county.

The next few years will be marked by increasing the richness of academic experiences across the curriculum and, also, by increasing the routes to those successes by improved scheduling, greater ease in meeting graduation requirements, and better articulated expectations for majors, as well as general education.

4. Aligning resources and priorities.

Because of several factors—the projected demographic downturn in northern New England and Vermont, especially; the history of declining state support; the tiny capital funding the Vermont State Colleges receive from the state—we are keenly aware that careful stewardship of human and capital resources is essential to our ongoing strength. Our continuing to identify and articulate the areas of investment in the college will be a characteristic of the next several years

as we carry out our College Plan. We will stay keenly aware of the changing needs of equipment and facilities in our core and signature programs, and will staff and upgrade space accordingly. This is a process that will happen intentionally, informed by articulated priorities and good institutional research.

5. Reinforcing our culture of planning.

Having made such a strong commitment to planning our way to a secure future, we will leverage our new College Plan to guide us in our decisions about resources, academic programming, student services, and the faculty and staff to carry out this work. National conversations have politicians arguing against “spending our way to prosperity” or “cutting our way to prosperity” and concluding that neither is likely to work. Likely this is true at the college level, too. We do believe in charting our future by using a guiding and living document that can be readily assessed and adjusted.

We are aware that as helpful and instructive as planning documents can be, they depend on good will, shared values, and commitment to the mission if they are to lead to change. We believe we have these ingredients; more, we have a deep sense of the responsibilities that are incumbent upon us as we enroll students who trust us with their aspirations.