

Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, and Students
of

JOHNSON STATE COLLEGE
Johnson, Vermont

by
An Evaluation Team representing the
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
of the
New England Association of Schools and Colleges

Prepared after study of the institution's self-evaluation report and a campus visit on
November 6–9, 2016

The members of the team:

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This report represents the views of the evaluation committee as interpreted by the chairperson. Its content is based on the committee's evaluation of the institution with respect to the Commission's criteria for accreditation. It is a confidential document in which all comments are made in good faith. The report is prepared both as an educational service to the institution and to assist the Commission in making a decision about the institution's accreditation status.

COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION
New England Association of Schools and College
Preface Page to the Team Report

Please complete during the team visit and include with the report prepared by the visiting team.

Date form completed: 11-08-16

Name of institution: Johnson State College

1. History: Year chartered or authorized 1827 Year first degrees awarded 1828

2. Type of control: ☒ State ☐ City ☐ Other; specify: _____
☐ Private, not-for-profit ☐ Religious group; specify: _____
☐ Proprietary ☐ Other; specify: _____

3. Degree level:
☒ Associate ☒ Baccalaureate ☒ Masters ☐ Professional ☐ Doctorate

4. Enrollment in degree programs (Use figures from fall semester of most recent year):

	Full-time	Part-time	FTE	Retention ^a	Graduation ^b	# Degrees ^c
Associate	14	6	18.42	N/A	N/A ¹	19
Baccalaureate	932	387	1139.92	69%	35%	304
Graduate	38	101	95.89	76%	69% ²	78

(a) full-time 1st to 2nd yr (b) 3 or 6 yr graduation rate (c) # of degrees awarded most recent yr

¹ JSC has not historically tracked associate degree program retention or graduation rates. Associate degree students are often initially admitted to the College in baccalaureate-level degree programs.

² JSC graduate programs vary significantly in length. Graduation rate above reflects 150% of time specific to students' programs.

5. Number of current faculty: Full-time 43³ Part-time 117 FTE 88.58⁴

³ All full-time faculty members presently employed including those currently on sabbatical.

⁴ Part-time faculty headcount is current as of 11-8-16 for fall 2016. To calculate part-time faculty FTE, workload credits were totaled, divided by 12, and then added to the total full-time faculty number.

6. Current fund data for most recently completed fiscal year: (Specify year: FY16)

(Enter dollars in millions; e.g., \$1,456,200 = \$1.456)

Revenues		Expenditures	
Tuition	\$16.771	Instruction	\$9.857
Gov't appropriations	\$4.824	Research	\$0.000
Gifts/grants/endowment	\$5.562	General	\$22.300
Auxiliary enterprises	\$4.782	Auxiliary enterprises	\$2.985
Other	\$1.071	Other	\$1.633
Total	\$33.010	Total	\$36.775

7. Number of off-campus locations:

In-state 0 Other U.S. 0 International 0 Total 0

8. Number of degrees and certificates offered electronically:

Programs offered entirely online 5 Programs offered 50-99% online 0

9. Is instruction offered through a contractual relationship?

☐ No ☒ Yes; specify program(s): Massage Therapy (Green Mountain Massage School); Woodworking, General Studies, Professional Studies (Vermont Woodworking School); Studio Art (Vermont Studio Center).

10. Other characteristics:

Introduction

The NEASC Evaluation Team wishes to acknowledge the warm hospitality of the Johnson State College (JSC) campus community, and to thank the students, staff, faculty, and administration for their openness and candor during our visit. Everyone with whom we met was aware of the purpose for our visit, and they were generous with their time in talking with us and answering our many questions. Separate meetings were held with the President's Cabinet; the Self-Study Steering Committee; various administrative department directors and academic department chairs; and three representatives, including the Board Chairperson, from the Board of Trustees for the Vermont State Colleges System (VSC). We had lunch on two days with students from various student organizations, including athletics teams, the President's Student Advisory Council, and the Student Government Association, and we held separate open meetings for staff and faculty. In addition, we held numerous one-on-one and small group meetings with representatives from all aspects of College operations.

The Evaluation Team found the Self-Study Report and other print materials provided, along with the online assessment data files, to be sufficiently comprehensive and an accurate, up-to-date description of the College. We appreciate the helpful support of the JSC staff in providing access to much online data and documentation, all of which contributed significantly to the process and helped form the basis for the information and evaluative judgments contained in this report. The following report supports our findings with regard to the *Standards for Accreditation* and highlights several primary strengths and concerns.

The Commission on Institutions of Higher Education approved JSC's last ten-year comprehensive evaluation in April 2006. This evaluation is a ten-year comprehensive evaluation following a two-year follow-up report in 2008; a fifth-year interim report submitted and accepted in 2010; a report approving four bachelor's programs via distance education in 2010; and a report on the online B.S. in Wellness and Alternative Medicine, and distance education more generally, which was approved in April 2016. At the request of the institution, the comprehensive evaluation originally scheduled for Fall 2015 was rescheduled for Fall 2016.

1. Mission and Purposes

The roots of Johnson State College (JSC) extend back almost two hundred years to 1828, when Johnson Academy was founded. In 1867, as Johnson Normal School, the institution was charged by the State of Vermont to provide teacher preparation. Just after World War II, Johnson's mission expanded to include the granting of baccalaureate degrees. JSC was initially accredited by NEASC in 1961, in conjunction with the founding of the Vermont State Colleges System (VSC) by the Vermont State Legislature. The institution's mission was further expanded in 1974, when JSC was accredited by NEASC as a general purpose institution. Three years later, in 1977, the External Degree Program (EDP) was established, expanding the College's ability to fulfill its mission to serve a student body that was then, and continues to be today, heavily rural, first-generation college, and low-to-moderate income—strongly characteristic of Vermont's northern population.

The core of JSC's mission statement is found in the opening sentence and has been firmly in place for well over a decade: "Johnson State College believes in the power of a liberal arts education to transform lives." This goal of *transforming lives* permeates much of the campus's operations and activities, and it is one component of the mission statement with which many members of the campus community are familiar and feel a strong feeling of ownership and participation.

The second key component to JSC's mission is their emphasis on the lifelong value and transformative power of a liberal arts education. In conjunction with the arrival of a new president on campus in the summer of 2015, the College took strategic steps to reaffirm and strengthen their mission as Vermont's public liberal arts college. Changes to the mission statement, first introduced by the Dean of Academic Affairs, were supported by the President's Council and the Faculty Assembly, and subsequently gained the unanimous endorsement of the Board of Trustees.

The revised mission, beyond that key opening sentence, goes on to assert JSC's intent to provide interdisciplinary, experiential learning experiences; greatly expanded opportunities for students to engage in learning beyond the traditional classroom; recognition and support for students' diverse backgrounds and goals; and "high standards, active participation, vigorous debate and mutual respect." This revised mission statement, in conjunction with a persuasive and compelling membership application, resulted in JSC's acceptance into the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC) in June 2016. As a COPLAC member, JSC's identity and mission as a public liberal arts college is firmly established, informing and directing the work done on campus, while also remaining true to its long-standing mission as a provider of public higher education within the VSC.

JSC's mission has been broadly disseminated, is readily available to the public, and enjoys the full support of the campus constituents, Board of Trustees, and Chancellor. The mission uniquely defines the College's distinctive character and is sufficiently concrete to provide focus and direction over the coming years, assuming that the College has sufficient fiscal resources and aligns the deployment of those resources with its mission-driven strategic planning and decision making.

2. Planning and Evaluation

Planning: Their self-study and supporting documentation provide evidence that Johnson State College (JSC) has a strong record of planning efforts, at least at the executive and departmental levels. At the executive level, JSC has produced several long-range plans since "Design for Our Future: 2003-2006." More recently, the College published "A Plan for Access, Engagement & Success: JSC 2010-2015," which is comprehensive in scope, addresses six targeted areas, lists accomplishments of the previous year, and contains a list of projects for the upcoming year. With the arrival of a new president in July 2015, the format of the 2010-15 plan was extended for one year without revision. The 2010-2016 plan, however, did not link projects to goals, assign priorities, or establish timetables and measures of success. In

addition, it was not clear to the team what person or group had responsibility for overall coordination of the institution's planning efforts or who was charged with evaluating the progress of these various plans. In short, it was more a list of projects than a strategic planning document that could be used to monitor the College's progress and measure its success.

Several months after her appointment, President Collins, with input from the campus community, created seven planning task forces covering the following areas: integrated marketing, information technology, academic quality, fundraising, diversity, institutional effectiveness, and enrollment and retention. Members of the President's Council serve as chairpersons of these seven task forces. In addition to the goals contained in the 2015-16 strategic plan extension and the objectives of the seven task forces, the president also established membership in the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges (COPLAC) as a goal for the College. Following an evaluation that included a campus visit, JSC's application for COPLAC membership was approved effective 2016-17.

The seven task forces represent a promising effort in planning, because they involve many members of the campus community. While leadership of the effort is mixed, some task forces are doing an excellent job. For example, the information technology task force's report articulates goals, lists key strengths and critical weaknesses, identifies key recommendations, and sets forth an action plan. This report is data driven and relies on information gathered during environmental scans of key areas of technology regarding computing and network infrastructure, wireless computing, computer labs for students, and the quality and extent of classroom technologies that would facilitate effective teaching. Several of the other task forces are similarly laying the groundwork for future data-driven planning efforts.

While these new planning teams have generated energy and enthusiasm on campus, it still is yet to be demonstrated that their efforts will bear fruit as the resulting projects will need to be implemented within the context of JSC's declining financial position. In addition, the positions of Dean of Academic Affairs and Dean of Students, which are key to the successful implementation of several strategic initiatives, are currently filled with interim appointments.

As noted in the next section, the Vermont State Colleges System (VSC) is overseen by a chancellor with staff housed in a central office in Montpelier. Neither website, however, contains clear and easily obtainable information regarding their respective responsibilities for planning and evaluation, and JSC's self-study didn't elaborate on the various planning and evaluation efforts between the System and the College. While the relationship between JSC and the VSC continues to evolve, at least three major areas of support provided by the System relate to planning: institutional research (IR), some aspects of information technology, and more recently the operation of accounts payable. In addition, the System serves as chief negotiator with the various union bargaining units on campus.

In the areas of IR and strategic planning, the VSC has a track record—extending back at least to the mid-1990s—of producing strategic plans, studies, and reports, and collecting comparative data relating to the five System institutions. In the area of information technology, the System oversees and manages the administrative computing platform that supports such functions as admissions, student records, and student registration. The VSC also plays a role in arranging for group purchases of information technology software on

behalf of the five colleges.

At the time of the visit, the long-range planning committee of the VSC Board of Trustees had reviewed the proposal to unify Johnson State and Lyndon State, which the Board approved in September 2016. In August 2016, the System had established a Unification Advisory Committee to “gather information and input from the college communities and identify the decisions that need to be considered to ensure a seamless unification of the two institutions.” The Unification Advisory Committee hopes to complete its work by December 2016, at which time a transition team will assume oversight of the unification process.

JSC’s self-study notes that while the College “rightly prides itself on the quality and professionalism of its workforce, many of its areas are thinly staffed.” This is especially true for IR, a key component in NEASC Standard Two. Institutional research is currently a part-time responsibility of both the registrar and the academic dean. With this level of staffing, combined with demands for more and more access to extracted data, it therefore wasn’t clear to the visiting team that IR staffing was sufficient to adequately support planning and evaluation at JSC.

JSC has also not yet been successful at reversing the trend of six consecutive years of declining enrollments and tuition revenues. As a result, the institution has relied on reserve funds to cover budgetary shortfalls, such that those funds are projected to be fully expended by the 2017-18 academic year.

Evaluation: As noted above, while the team found evidence that an extensive amount of planning is taking place at the System level, at JSC, and within and across respective departments and organizational units, it wasn’t clear how these planning efforts were being coordinated, assessed, and evaluated. Furthermore, on both a strategic planning and operational level, it wasn’t clear how the goals of each plan are linked to budget priorities, how the results of these efforts are being communicated to the various campus constituents, or how they fit into the overall strategic planning efforts at both the College and the System.

At the departmental level, it was noted in the self-study that external reviews of academic departments and programs have been undertaken by external bodies. While JSC considers the VSC system of academic program reviews known as PReCIP (Program Review and Continuous Improvement Process) to be well-conceived and well-developed, the self-study added that JSC “needs to insure recommendations from the continuous improvement process are discussed at department meetings and become a continuing point of reference for all academic programs.” It is worth noting that in the College’s long-range plan for 2010-15, JSC committed to gathering evidence of program effectiveness and to continuous improvement, yet the College still needs to establish assessment protocols and systematic methods for collection of student evaluations of academic courses and programs. (Also see Standard 8 on Educational Effectiveness.)

In summary, JSC still needs to develop a more robust system of data collection that incorporates regular assessment of its activities and programs that would result in a culture of accountability. While faculty and staff appeared to understand the need to link planning and budgeting, for the purpose of ensuring that every available dollar is spent strategically, they

expressed concern about being able to keep up with the work, particularly without the necessary assessment support, software, and additional staffing.

3. Organization and Governance

Johnson State College (JSC) shares a Board of Trustees with the other four members of the VSC. Each college in the System has an organizational structure designed by its president. At JSC, faculty and students report that they have an appropriate voice in governance and believe they help shape decisions at the College. The College has appropriate structures in place, as well as generally clear lines of communication that include all campus constituencies. Regarding resources to provide adequate support, however, faculty, staff and students expressed concerns. Examples cited include high advising loads for full-time faculty and student difficulty in getting the courses needed to graduate in four years.

Governing Board: State law created the fifteen-member Board of Trustees of the VSC as the entity responsible for the quality and integrity of each of the five state institutions in the System. The board includes twelve trustees who are either appointed by the governor or named by the chair of the board, one trustee appointed from each of the two chambers of the Vermont legislature, and a student trustee elected by the VSC Student Government Association. Trustees serve four-year terms, except for the student trustee, who serves one year and may be elected for a second year. The governor serves as an ex-officio board member. The System's chancellor reports to the board, while the five college presidents report to the chancellor. The chancellor meets regularly with the Council of Presidents, which recently was expanded to include the System's three vice presidents.

The Board of Trustees approves new programs, reviews degree programs, sets annual tuition and fee rates, and approves policies at the System level that address cross-college matters of significance. The System office provides information technology services in the areas of accounts receivable and payable, admissions, finance, financial aid, payroll, library, registrars, and teaching and learning technology. Five bargaining units represent college employees and collective bargaining agreements are negotiated at the System level, which also audits finances.

Internal Governance: JSC's organizational model includes a dean of academic affairs, a dean of students, and a dean of administration, all of whom report to the president along with five other direct reports. According to the organizational chart, the interim academic dean has fifteen direct reports, including academic department chairs, and the dean of students has five. The interim dean of administration has nine direct reports and also serves as chief technology officer and human resources director.

The president has both a cabinet and the President's Council. The cabinet is made up of the three deans, who meet weekly with the president. Interviews with the president and deans suggest that the cabinet serves as the president's closest advisors, but tends not to be a decision-making body. Agendas for cabinet meetings are available for review but minutes are not taken. The President's Council is made up of fifteen senior administrators and faculty members who meet monthly with the president to advise her on priorities and needs, and

work with her on projects. The President's Council serves as the steering and review committee for the strategic plan, and reviews and sets policy as needed. Minutes of those meetings are available on the College portal. The chairpersons for the seven task forces established last year by President Collins also serve on the President's Council.

The president also meets twice a year at the College with the President's Roundtable, a community advisory board, to facilitate communication between community leaders and the institution. The group includes College staff, as well as representatives of local business, government, non-profit, and education agencies.

The faculty are strongly committed to their role in shared governance as it takes place primarily through the Faculty Assembly, which meets monthly and advises the administration on academic matters. All full-time faculty members are members of the Assembly. The Assembly has five primary functions as outlined in its governance document: providing leadership on academic and professional matters; maintaining and improving standards of excellence for academic programs; facilitating communication among faculty, with other groups in the community, and with the president on academic and professional issues; and overseeing the faculty governance structure. The interim academic dean, who serves as chief academic officer, meets twice a month with academic department chairs. This group does not vote, but serves as a conduit of information in both directions. The faculty handbook is not available on JSC's public website.

The Faculty Assembly's governance document clearly outline its responsibilities, organization, policies, and procedures. It has seven standing committees: Faculty Council Curriculum; Academic Status; Retention, Tenure and Promotion; Faculty Development; Graduate; Assessment; and General Education. The Assembly elects its leadership, the Faculty Council, which is made up of the chair and vice-chair of the Assembly, a secretary, and two at-large members. The Faculty Council appoints faculty members to the standing committees. Students are represented on all standing committees except the Retention, Tenure and Promotion Committee. The membership and charge of each committee is spelled out in the bylaws. While all full-time faculty members of the College are members of the Assembly, a quorum of the group requires only fifteen, according to its governance document. Faculty Assembly members expressed some concern that only twenty-five faculty members, on average, attend meetings. They also report that they do not believe the faculty has an appropriate voice in the administrative allocation of JSC resources.

The students' role in governance rests with the Student Government Association (SGA), whose eleven senators are elected by the student body, and the Student Advisory Council, made up of fifteen students nominated by faculty, staff, or themselves and then selected by the president. Interviews with members of the SGA revealed that the senators believe they make a difference in the lives of students and that they have an appropriate voice in campus governance. For example, they adopted a resolution to send to the Board of Trustees expressing concern about the speed at which the unification of Johnson State and Lyndon State would take place. To finalize the resolution, they met twice with the College president, who addressed their issues and allayed their concerns; the senators then shared that information with other students. Among the projects undertaken by the SGA this year are social justice flags to be installed on flagpoles on campus and a voter registration drive.

SGA members report that they intentionally have not participated in the Student Advisory Council, in an effort to keep those groups distinct. Three senators from JSC are voting members of the VSC Student Association, which reviews and responds to System-level issues affecting students. This association also elects the student member of the VSC Board of Trustees. The SGA vice president attends Faculty Assembly meetings, and all senators report that they have access as needed to faculty, staff, and administrators to discuss their issues. According to the senators, the College's capacity to meet the needs of students is diminished by its current lack of resources, noting in particular that the infrequency with which some courses are offered can make it difficult to graduate in four years. On the other hand, students credit their professors with softening the blow of diminished resources in several ways, such as providing opportunities to travel and present research at conferences.

While many expressed concerns over the planned unification with Lyndon State, they also reported that they believe it will provide more opportunities for students. They also have confidence that the new president's approach, which is generally described as open, collaborative, and accessible, will continue to be communicative and transparent.

4. The Academic Program

Over the most recent four academic years (AY11 through AY14) for which official data are available, JSC has graduated 1,599 students, including 42 associate degrees, 1,311 bachelor's degrees, and 246 master's degrees. Of these graduates, 48 percent (766) were in the liberal arts and the rest were in professional studies programs, all of which contain a significant liberal arts component. As of October 2015, 86 percent (1,320 of 1,538) of JSC students are matriculating undergraduates. The total undergraduate headcount was 1,320 for FY16 and is estimated at 1,410 for FY17. Only three departments out of twelve—Psychology, Biology, and Business Management—have experienced a substantial to minimal increase in enrollment in the past three years. In contrast, majors in the Art program, for example, declined by almost 50 percent between FY13 and FY16.

Assuring Academic Quality: JSC has full oversight of all academic programs on campus. It assesses academic quality through the Retention, Tenure and Promotion Committee and the Curriculum Committee of the Faculty Assembly, faculty development, and the General Education Core Curriculum. New programs require both external and internal approval, as outlined in VSC Policy 102. A department proposing a new undergraduate program and courses must submit their formal proposal to the Curriculum Committee, while new graduate courses and programs are reviewed by the Graduate Committee. Recommendations are then forwarded to the full Faculty Assembly for endorsement. The next step sends the program and/or course(s) to the administration through the academic dean, and from there the proposal moves to the VSC Board of Trustees for final approval.

Academic program review follows VSC Policies 109 and 101, as prescribed in the Program Review and Continuous Improvement Process (PReCIP), to affirm and validate the status of programs. A new curriculum mapping exercise to uncover duplication and inefficiencies, and

to gauge the fit between learning outcomes and course offerings, has been instituted. However, information gleaned from that process has yet to yield any actionable insights and recommendations to improve the overall institutional effectiveness of the College.

Undergraduate Degree Programs: Johnson State College (JSC), a predominantly undergraduate institution, offers baccalaureate degrees in twenty-seven majors. The well-established External Degree Program (EDP) is available to students at remote locations and online. Associate degrees are available in General Studies and Technical Theater, and students can earn certificates in Accounting, Business, Management, Nonprofit Management, and Small Business Management. New concentrations have recently been approved in Criminal Justice, Sport Management, Hospitality and Tourism Management, Health and Sport Psychology, Pre-Professional Counseling, and Pre-Physical Therapy.

Consistency in graduation standards is demonstrated through a requirement that all graduating students demonstrate attainment of four foundational skills: written communication, quantitative literacy, oral communication, and information literacy. This requires them to pass two exams, the comprehensive Writing Proficiency Exam (WPE) and the Quantitative Reasoning Assessment Exam (or MAT 1080 course), plus one course designated as “quantitatively enriched.” Students must demonstrate proficiency in oral communication through course work. For information literacy, proficiency is demonstrated through the successful completion of an online tutorial. An initial low pass rate of 60 percent on the WPE resulted in a subsequent overhaul of this program, which has brought the pass rate up to 77 percent. Students who fail the WPE may opt to take the “Self Sufficient Writer” course to address specific writing deficiencies.

General Education: The new General Education Core Curriculum (GECC) consists of four clusters: First-Year Seminar (three credits); Creative Audience (one credit); Foundational Skills (16 to 19 credits in mathematics, writing, and sciences); and Integrative Perspectives including aesthetics (6 credits), social/historical (6 credits), global (6 credits), and civic (3 credits). The GECC requires 39 to 44 credits of the 120 total credits needed to graduate, on average. The GECC is designed to equip graduates with “the skills needed to flourish” in the real world. The goal of the innovative and interdependent GECC is integrative learning, and it addresses the pace of change in society at the local, national, and global levels. The GECC is widely accepted on campus and among students, who appreciate its flexibility. However, the program lacks standard assessment protocols and instruments to evaluate its effectiveness, strengths and weaknesses, and fit with program and student learning outcomes.

External Degree Program (EDP): Through JSC’s community-based distance learning program, the External Degree Program (EDP), students can earn degrees in Business, Interdisciplinary Studies, Professional studies, Psychology, Wellness and Alternative Medicine, and Childhood Education. Eighty-one EDP courses were offered in Fall 2016, and students can take courses on-campus or from any member institution of the VSC. The EDP has received an award for excellence in the state of Vermont and offers a hybrid program that combines on-campus and online course options. The strength of this program lies in its distance learning and online platforms, flexibility of degree options through individualized majors, and close advising beyond course selection.

The EDP had built enrollment to 614 students, but since 2011 it has declined to 452. Nonetheless, roughly half of JSC's graduates finish through the EDP. All EDP programs include a general education component that is similar to the on-campus GECC, although with minor differences, and all programs go through PReCIP and JSC faculty committees. EDP program faculty, many of whom teach part-time, are approved by the various chairs of the departments. The program is currently being led by a new associate dean who has expanded responsibilities for recruiting, marketing, enrollment management, and online programs.

The Wellness and Alternative Medicine program is being expanded nationwide and it is planned that full-time faculty in the Education Department will advise EDP majors in Education.

JSC also is moving into the Early College market by opening up classes to Vermont's high school students, which has significant potential for growth in enrollment and much-needed revenue.

Graduate Degree Programs: JSC offers three graduate programs: the MA in Education, MA in Counseling, and MFA in Studio Arts. Enrollment in these programs peaked in AY05 with 255 students, but has experienced a 43 percent decline to 146 student in AY15. First-to-second year retention declined from 86 percent in AY13 to 76 percent in AY16, but the graduation rate improved from 65.5 percent to 69 percent within that same time period.

The MA in Education offers seven concentrations, and degrees range from thirty to fifty credits, depending on the program's licensure requirements. The four concentrations in Curriculum and Instruction lead to teacher licensure at the K-12 level and are approved for teacher licensure standards set by the Vermont Education Department. The assessment method involves a triangular framework approach in pedagogy, academics, and disposition, with a continuous emphasis on student self-reflection. The capstone seminar results in a student portfolio that includes fifty pieces of evidence from their teaching experiences. JSC is the only state college in Vermont that uses an outside review board to evaluate the portfolio. Based upon prior assessments of the portfolios, JSC's Education Department found student knowledge gaps in working with diverse children in an inclusive environment and identified the need for better writing. To address these gaps, a new graduate course named Educational Studies was developed to introduce students to the concept of inclusion and to improve their APA writing skills.

The remaining three concentrations for the MA in Education are Applied Behavior Analysis, which prepares students to sit for the Certification Examination of the National Behavior Analyst Certification Board; Special Education; and Foundations of Education. The Special Education concentration is designed for licensed teachers seeking endorsement in special education; the concentration in Foundations of Education provides a non-licensure track that offers more individualized course selections.

The MA in Counseling integrates theory and practice in preparing students to become professional counselors. The program offers a general concentration as well as concentrations

in Addictions, Clinical Mental Health, and School Counseling. The core curriculum requires fifty-one credits; nine additional credits are required for concentration courses. The concentration in Clinical Mental Health fulfills the state requirement for students to take the two nationally administered licensing exams for the Mental Health License. The sequence of courses in the MA in Counseling allows students to develop increasingly complex counseling skills for the profession. A review of the course syllabi indicates that many of these courses require research papers and presentations. However, the identification of learning outcomes or objectives on graduate syllabi is inconsistent.

The MFA in Studio Arts is a much smaller program that currently has only eight students. JSC offers the option of either a campus-based program or a low-residency program at the nearby Vermont Studio Center. Requirements for the program involve the completion of sixty credits. Courses include Studio Center Residency, Contemporary Arts Seminar, Independent Studio Work, MFA Thesis Preparation, and Thesis Exhibition. Assessment of student learning and skills in Studio Arts is done on an ongoing basis throughout the program.

Despite the 43 percent decline in graduate enrollment from Fall 2005 to Fall 2015 (from 255 to 146 students), JSC has ambitious goals for increasing the number of graduate students and is currently working with the Education Advisory Board, a consulting company, on strategies. They realize that their goal of increasing new graduate enrollment from forty-five students to 104 in just one year is not realistic without a significant financial investment in additional human resources, so the College is committed to hiring two new graduate faculty next year. In Fall 2017, JSC is planning to hire a tenure-track faculty member for the MA in Education concentration in Applied Behavior Analysis. Also in Fall 2017, a new tenure-track faculty member in Counseling will replace a temporary faculty member.

The Graduate Program Committee, a group of three faculty members appointed by the Faculty Assembly, provides the governance structure for overseeing all graduate programs. Changes to the graduate curriculum are approved by this committee and forwarded directly to the dean of academic affairs. Requests to initiate new graduate programs must also be approved by the Faculty Assembly before being forwarded to the academic dean and, subsequently, to the VSC Board of Trustees for final approval.

Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit: All of JSC's degree offerings at the associate's, bachelor's and master's degree levels meet the minimum degree requirements of sixty semester credits, 120 semester credits, and thirty semester credits respectively. JSC's self-study expressed concern that the number of course requirements in some majors may serve as an impediment to program completion. According to the self-study, 40 percent of the twenty-five bachelor's degrees require fifty or more semester credits in the major. During the site visit, several students expressed frustration about the cancellation of required courses because of insufficient enrollment. While students were given the option of a directed study, a course substitution, or taking the course at another college, many wanted to take the course at JSC. It's possible that these two issues—too many required courses and too many course cancellations—are contributing to student attrition and JSC's low four- and six-year graduation rates. Each academic department recently completed a curriculum mapping exercise for courses in their major, which is to be used to identify curriculum redundancies

that may help to pare down the number of required courses in some majors.

When Burlington College closed in May 2016, JSC agreed to teach out those students attending there from the Vermont Woodworking School. The chairperson of JSC's Fine Arts Department reviewed and approved the courses needed to complete the degree, and also met with and approved the faculty. In addition, the chairperson has observed classes and met with students. Since this collaboration with the Vermont Woodworking School is going well, JSC is planning to submit a substantive change proposal to NEASC to continue this contractual arrangement in the future. JSC also maintains a collaboration with the Vermont Studio Center in Vermont where MFA students can elect to do a short-term residency program. Few students do this, however, because of the high residency costs.

JSC maintains the academic integrity of the credit hour. Three-credit courses meet for forty-five contact hours for fifteen weeks during the fall and spring semesters; based on a review of sample syllabi, time spent studying and completing outside assignments is compatible with the expectation of two contact hours of outside work for every contact hour in class. Classes that meet in an accelerated format, such as some of the MA in Counseling courses, require pre-course assignments.

Credit for prior experiential or non-collegiate sponsored learning is awarded through the Office of External Programs of the VSC. To apply, students must first enroll in a three-credit course, Assessment of Prior Learning, in which students create their portfolio documenting prior learning in a variety of academic subjects. When completed, the portfolio is submitted to the System's Office of External Programs for evaluation by teams of faculty and practitioners with expertise in the areas of the credit requests. While there is no limit to the number of credits that students can request or receive through Assessment of Prior Learning, the total is unlikely to exceed thirty credits. However, the number of prior learning credits awarded is not controlled by the individual colleges and could potentially exceed 25 percent of the degree.

JSC students must complete at least 25 percent of their undergraduate credits at the College, and JSC accepts transfer credits only from regionally accredited colleges and universities. All credits earned at a VSC institution, starting with the fall 2002 semester, are accepted by JSC without question, along with their corresponding grade/GPA, as institutional credit. The policy for accepting undergraduate transfer credits from other institutions is clearly indicated on the JSC website. No more than twelve credits, which must have been earned at an accredited college or university, can be transferred into a graduate program. Graduate transfer credits must pertain to the degree, at least for use as electives, and be no more than five years old. A student can request a waiver on either the number or age of credits by submitting a letter of request to the Graduate Committee for a decision. The Committee has historically agreed to a waiver for credits earned at JSC's sister colleges, but requires additional documentation (course descriptions, etc.) from others. The student's academic advisor's recommendation is also required.

Policies regarding continuation in, termination from, or re-admission to academic programs are compatible with JSC's mission of "recognizing and supporting the diverse starting points, backgrounds and goals of students." Former students who have been away from the College

for longer than a year may re-apply by submitting an online Application for Readmission. Students who are returning within one year of an official leave of absence do not need to reapply.

The Academic Honesty Policy appears on undergraduate syllabi, helping to reinforce academic integrity. Courses offered in an accelerated, online, or hybrid format have the same learning outcomes as traditional, semester-long, face-to-face courses. Students enrolled in online courses must sign into their courses or exams with an individualized username and password to gain access, to help ensure that the student who registered for the course is the same one participating in it.

Enrollment growth is anticipated in the online programs and EDP. While on-campus enrollment has declined in recent years, enrollment in JSC Online experienced a 4.1 percent increase this year. The recently hired associate dean for distance education brings strong experience in administering, designing, and teaching online courses. While a formal training program for faculty who would like to teach online courses has not been offered in the past, the new associate dean is planning to offer two professional development courses that will lead to a JSC certificate in teaching online. The College's recent decision to offer its major in Wellness and Alternative Medicine entirely online, in addition to continuing the face-to-face program, could generate national appeal. The EDP is another area that JSC expects to grow and is considering offering external graduate programs.

One area of online service delivery that needs improvement, particularly with the anticipated growth in online course offerings, is the availability of tutoring. JSC currently offers online writing assistance, and additional forms of online tutoring are under discussion. At the time of the team's visit, however, online students were still required to come to campus for any tutoring services other than writing assistance.

5. Students

Admissions: Johnson State College (JSC) is a broad-access, public institution serving a wide range of students both on and off campus. The admissions materials and College admissions webpage clearly describe the characteristics of the students JSC seeks to serve and the individualized approach the Admissions Office takes to recruit students with the intellectual and personal characteristics to be successful and satisfied at JSC. The staff in the Admissions Office guides students through the admissions and financial aid processes with clearly stated information customized for the various student populations recruited and the specific pathways through which they enter JSC. The New Student Checklist on the JSC Portal streamlines the admissions process and makes navigation of the IT processes involved easier for prospective students. Admissions also takes an individualized, interactive approach with prospective students and their families for campus visits, evening and weekend appointments, and formally scheduled recruitment events.

Student financial aid is administered through a well-organized program detailed on the JSC Financial Aid webpage, and includes clear and timely information about the cost of

attendance for students based upon their entering student status. The website describes the types of financial aid grants, loans, and scholarships that are available, and the criteria used for their award, a cost and debt calculator, and detailed information intended to help students understand their awards. Finally, this website also clearly displays federal, state, and institutional policies affecting eligibility for financial aid and the circumstances under which JSC might rescind a financial aid award.

Like many colleges and universities in the Northeast, where the high school population is declining, JSC has seen steady declines in application numbers and enrollment of new students. In the last five years, enrollment has declined by nearly 16 percent. In FY16, undergraduate FTE (full-time equivalent) stood at 1165, a slight improvement from 1127 in FY15. However, headcount was 949 full-time and 410 part-time, down from 979 and 479 respectively the previous year. Graduate FTE was 113 in FY16, up from 107 in FY15, and headcount was 41 full-time and 138 part-time, with full-time holding steady with FY15 and part-time down 23. The College has been working to address these declines with recruitment strategies consistent with its mission and that are likely to attract students who will be successful at JSC, as well as with retention strategies to ease transition, enhance preparedness, and improve overall student success. JSC hired the Education Advisory Board, a consulting firm, to identify growth potential in the transfer, graduate, and online student markets. The newly established Enrollment and Retention Task Force issued its first report in September 2106. This report outlines a thorough strategic enrollment plan that focuses on both recruitment and retention, as JSC recognizes improvements are needed in both areas.

Athletics has strong potential for increasing enrollment, since student athletes tend to be among the highest retained student populations. In 2013, JSC established a five-year strategic enrollment plan for Athletics that has resulted in the expansion of intercollegiate sports offerings. This plan is designed to both increase the student athlete percentage of the overall student population from 13 percent to 20 percent, and expand the percentage of out-of-state student athletes to 60 percent, as compared to a 20 percent overall out-of-state population. To date, this plan has resulted in a 33 percent increase in student athletes (from 146 to 195) and an increase in first-to-second year retention from 64 percent to 75 percent in three years.

Despite the detailed nature of JSC's Strategic Enrollment Plan, the enrollment goals for Fall 2017 are ambitious. The College acknowledges that declining resources from lower enrollments have resulted in staffing shortages that affect Admissions as well as other areas, and many of the strategies under discussion were still in development at the time of the team's visit. Therefore the projected 8 percent growth in FTE in a single year might not be realistic.

JSC uses several methods of evaluation to assess student readiness for collegiate study and provide services to meet the needs of students it admits. For example, students with an admission score below 80 are designated "transition year" students and receive special outreach and support from the Academic Support Services Office. A number of other initiatives are designed to support first-time, full-time undergraduate students, particularly those from traditionally underserved populations. A five-year TRIO grant allows JSC to provide enhanced support to low-income (46 percent of JSC students are Pell eligible), first-generation college students (52 percent of all degree-seeking JSC undergraduates) and students with disabilities. In addition, a newly established Summer Bridge program can

accommodate fifty students, with priority given to low-income and first-generation students.

Student Services and Co-Curricular Experiences: JSC houses 475 students in a variety of residence halls designed to accommodate 560 residents. There are traditional double-loaded corridors with common bathrooms and suite-style halls with eight students to a shared bath; substance-free and gender-neutral housing is available. The residence halls were built in the late 1960s and early 1970s and, despite showing signs of wear, are clean and reasonably well-maintained. They are not readily handicap accessible, although a few ground-floor singles near accessible bathrooms are used to provide accommodation as needed. Students describe the halls as bland or colorless, but also note that living on campus is convenient. Nineteen undergraduate resident assistants and three part-time graduate-student hall advisors provide programming and 24/7 supervision. The residence director is the sole administrator in the central office and provides backup to the hall advisors on nights and weekends.

JSC endeavors to ensure the success of its students, offering an array of resources and services. Students receive information and guidance about opportunities and experiences that may promote their success in multiple and consistent ways, beginning with Orientation and First-Year Experience programs and continuing through conversations with academic advisors, faculty, resident assistants, peer mentors, and professional staff in Student Life. The College webpage and JSC Portal have clearly marked links to an array of academic, personal, recreational, social, and professional development programs and services.

A significant area of strength for JSC is its coordinated approach to providing new students with information and orientation to the College designed to help them be successful. The First-Year Experience is well conceptualized and delivered with an intentional approach to new student transition grounded in best practices. Several offices work collaboratively to deliver these programs and supports, including the First-Year Experience Office, Academic Support Services, and Student Life. The First-Year Seminar, delivered through a variety of courses, has seven key learning objectives intended to prepare students for academic success.

JSC provides advising and academic support services appropriate to the student body. Staff in Admissions, Academic Support Services, and Student Life work together, and collaboratively with faculty and staff, to assist students in attaining their academic and personal goals. The Advising and Registration Center website clearly indicates the services it offers to undergraduates, graduate students, and online students. The complaint cited most frequently by students is the infrequency with which required courses are offered, but the advising staff and faculty are often able to assist them with exceptions, substitutions, or independent study to meet degree requirements. In the 2013 Advising Study, 75 percent of on-campus students agreed that their advisors were helpful and concerned about their academic success. Eighty-eight percent of EDP students and 91 percent of graduate students responded accordingly.

JSC provides a number of high impact co-curricular student experiences consistent with the mission of providing a transformative liberal arts education in a highly individualized manner. The institution's faculty and professional staff collectively have sufficient interaction with students outside of class to promote students' academic achievement and provide academic and career guidance. Students get to know faculty and work closely with them on research or other creative projects, travel to conferences to present research findings, and field trips or

study abroad. Faculty-student relationship, and the out-of-class opportunities that come from these relationships, are highly important to students' educational experience and career planning, as well as their satisfaction with the institution.

Students strongly agree that faculty and staff care about them and their education, while faculty volunteer that students are eager to take advantage of field trips and conferences.

JSC provides social and recreational activities and supports opportunities for student leadership and participation in campus organizations and governance, and students speak highly of a campus culture that fosters personal growth and the development of leadership skills. The Student Activities Office advises SLAP (Student Led Activities Programs), which runs a variety of programs, and the Student Government Association, which makes appointments to governance committees; oversees clubs and organizations; and develops, advocates for, and implements projects that address student needs. Student leaders talk proudly about making a difference on campus, the advocacy and networking skills they are learning, and opportunities to participate in a political system that mirrors that of the real world. Through the SERVE Office, students design and run community service projects and alternative break trips. Two hundred students are currently seeking membership in the newly formed National Society of Leadership and Success.

JSC's NCAA Division III program offers fifteen sports and is operated in a manner that adheres to the institutional mission, supports institutional goals, and is administered with integrity. The athletics director reports to the president and JSC has complete control of the program and its finances. Student athletes must be in good academic standing to be eligible for intercollegiate play, and academic progress is monitored regularly. Student athletes acknowledge that their involvement in athletics is a key factor in their success and satisfaction with the College. The Athletics department also runs a robust intramural and recreational program for the student body at large.

Career Services is well organized and available in person and online. An individualized approach is combined with a well-structured four-year plan for students to explore career options, develop a sense of purpose, explore areas of interest, and develop the professional and personal skills necessary to be successful in the work world. Nearly all programs require their majors to complete an internship, but many students pursue multiple internships, both on and off campus. The 2015 graduate student survey indicates that 90 percent of respondents were either employed in their chosen profession or pursuing graduate study.

JSC is a relatively safe campus, as indicated in the 2016-17 annual campus security report and in comments offered by students. The Office of Public Safety operates 24/7, 365 days a year, and is staffed with a director, five full- and part-time officers, and a number of student security officers. Public Safety works closely with the Residence Life staff and local law enforcement. The campus maintains emergency blue lights outdoors and a campus-wide emergency notification system. The public safety director leads the emergency planning team, and the 2015 emergency operations plan is available online. The director has provided training to his staff, but notes they are eager for more training in issues affecting campus safety and security, including mental health and trauma-informed sexual assault training.

JSC provides mental health services in its Wellness Center on the lower level of a residence hall. The Center is run by a licensed clinical social worker who holds master's degrees in social work and public health. Her staff consists of two part-time counselors, four counseling interns enrolled in graduate school at JSC, and an administrative assistant. After-hours crisis response is available through county mental health clinicians available for phone assessment, or through in-person assessment for students who are transported to a hospital. Like most other colleges, JSC is seeing spikes in mental health diagnoses, anxiety disorders, and suicide ideation. The number of students seeking support from the Center is increasing significantly, with more contacts in the first half of fall 2016 (100) than in all of last year (80). The Wellness Center strives to provide an array of holistic programs and services, but the demand for individual counseling services limits their ability to do so.

Medical services are contracted with Morrisville Family Medical Health Care, to which a shuttle provides transportation daily during the week for routine appointments. After hours, local EMS provides transportation in an emergency. Mandated health and immunization records are collected and reviewed each year by the Wellness Center staff. Although its services are well advertised, the Wellness Center is difficult to find and largely non-accessible to students with physical mobility issues. In addition, Wellness Center hours are limited to Monday through Friday, 9 am to 4 pm.

The lack of on-campus medical services for simple health issues is challenging and the interim dean acknowledged that an additional full-time counselor in the Wellness Center and a hybrid approach to outreach education could significantly reduce the stress on services through preventive health education and outreach. In addition, weekend reliance on student security officers, combined with dependence on emergency response transport to hospital facilities fifteen miles away, are potentially serious concerns, particularly given the increasing mental health fragility of today's college students. Despite limited resources, plans could be developed for supplementing with part-time help as enrollment increases and to explore federal (some of which target rural communities in particular) and state grants that might enable JSC to increase their staff and services. Conversations with staff in Public Safety, Residence Life and the Wellness Center also indicate the need for more professional training, particularly around sexual violence.

Policies on student rights and responsibilities, including student conduct and grievance procedures, are clearly stated, well publicized, and readily available in the Student Handbook, which is available on the JSC website and provided to students electronically each year as required. All required federal disclosures and policies are included, including procedures for student complaints and policies related to student records.

The newly formed Diversity Task Force has begun to explore how the College might best achieve the spirit and intent of its equal opportunity and diversity goals, while recognizing that the faculty and staff do not mirror the diversity of JSC's current student body. Some steps have been taken, including the establishment of gender-neutral floors in the residence halls, adding gender-neutral bathrooms in academic buildings, establishing a Veterans' Center and Women's Center, installing flagpoles at the request of Student Government to display issue-

based flags, and seeking Campus Pride's LGBT-friendly campus designation. Various campus employees have suggested that some basic education around reasonable accommodations and culturally appropriate language would also be helpful.

The Student Services staff are qualified by formal training and work experience, and organizationally placed to effectively address the needs of students. However fiscal restraints have resulted in resource shortages, including personnel, technology, and funding to fully implement the institution's student services policies and procedures. The challenge of trying to deliver quality services with fewer people also has limited the ability of student service staff members to engage in professional development to enhance their training or, in some cases, stay current with changing expectations. Student services staff indicate that there is not a program of regular and systematic evaluation of the appropriateness and effectiveness of JSC's student services. Time and assessment capacity appear to be significant barriers, as does the inability to obtain data from the information system.

The JSC webpage describes the Family Educational Records Privacy Act and the Student Handbook explains FERPA more thoroughly, including the complete list of what is considered directory information by the VSC, as well as its information-release policies, which are clear and respect the privacy of the individual, records confidentiality, and the best interests of the students and institution.

6. Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship

Faculty and Academic Staff: Johnson State College (JSC) employed forty-six full-time faculty in FY13, compared to forty in FY16. Part-time faculty numbered 155 in FY13 and dropped to 118 by FY16. The reduction in faculty lines roughly parallels the 13 percent decline in full-time enrollment, while the FTE enrollment to FT faculty ratio was essentially flat from 2006 to 2012 (21.8 percent to 23.91 percent).

In FY16, twenty-seven full-time and twenty-eight part-time faculty held doctorates, compared to thirty-two and thirty-three respectively in FY13. Seventy-five percent of full-time faculty are in the ranks of senior faculty, making JSC top-heavy in experience. Three years ago, thirty-one full-time faculty were tenured, compared to thirty-three in FY16 and thirty-four in FY17. On average, two professors and/or associate professors are retiring or departing per year.

The median teaching load is between eleven and twelve credit hours. All hired faculty engage in teaching, advising, scholarship/creative, and service on campus and in the community. Faculty participate in hiring searches, serve on committees, and perform other services to JSC and the campus community at large, in addition to their teaching loads. Approximately eighty part-time faculty teach on campus, while the rest teach exclusively in the External Degree Program (EDP).

Professional development funds are available to full- and part-time faculty, full-time faculty have access to a \$1,000 professional expenses fund, and tenured faculty may apply for

sabbatical leave when qualified. As a liberal arts institution and a new member of COPLAC, the expectation of faculty scholarship, creative activity, and student research is well institutionalized, so the minimal funding available to support those purposes could now become a concern. Faculty engage in creative activity with students, as evidenced by students attending regional conferences to present their research papers and poster presentations. Evidence of faculty creative activity is indicated, in part, by successful writing of grants to support both student and faculty research. Faculty use traditional and electronic/digital media in the delivery of course content, employment of experiential learning, and creative activity.

Faculty salaries and other contractual obligations are established in the bargaining agreement between the state and the faculty union. The faculty evaluation process, which is in line with the mission and purposes of JSC, is well documented and defined throughout the bargaining agreement that governs faculty employment. Reviews include student evaluations, a self-reflection, peer observation and review, and an administrative review. Excellence in teaching, creative activity and scholarship lead to advancement in rank. Full-time faculty reviews go through the Retention, Tenure, and Promotion Committee. New part-time faculty are observed by department heads, while continuing part-time faculty are reviewed on a regular basis by a peer review committee and a designee of the academic dean. Contractual obligations and institutional priorities have made post-tenure review of faculty less than adequate and “less effective,” as noted in the self-study.

EDP faculty, who are predominately part-time and not party to the contractual bargaining agreement, are reviewed regularly by a peer review committee composed of full- and part-time faculty and the program director. In conjunction with JSC’s targeted increased enrollment in the EDP, however, more formal and institutionalized assessment of its faculty and evaluation of its programs might need to be addressed.

The staff at the Academic and Registration Center combine advising students, degree planning, and evaluation of degree requirement for graduation. The Office of First-Year Experience, Academic Support Services, and the Counseling Center provide support for students on campus, along with support staff to assist JSC students.

JSC’s enrollment decline and corresponding reduction in faculty numbers have placed additional burden on the remaining faculty. The number of full-time faculty available to advise students, participate in general education classes, assess academic programs for VSC, and serve university-wide committees has decreased, while the total workload has remained constant. Several factors have led to uneven student advising at the department level, including vacant faculty lines and senior faculty reluctance to assume heavier advising loads. Some faculty, however, have explored and successfully implemented new, creative advising strategies with enhanced efficiency, such as group advising and improved advising tools. A number of faculty anticipate that the proposed unification of Johnson State and Lyndon State will help to alleviate heavy faculty workloads, but the potential advantages of the merger are yet to be worked out.

The percentage of women in the full-time faculty has remained relatively flat, at 35 percent in FY13 and 38 percent in FY16. Thus JSC has achieved some degree of gender diversity in the

faculty ranks, but the lack of ethnic diversity in the ranks of faculty and staff remains a concern. Relatively little data on minority or diverse populations on campus was available to the review team. However, it should be noted that diversity among the student body has increased in recent years. Underrepresented student minorities rose to 12 percent in 2016, having gradually increased from 8 percent in 2013.

Teaching and Learning: JSC is to be commended for many strong aspects of the student learning experience, including but not limited to its Academic Support Services, the First-Year Experience, COPLAC membership, individualized services and opportunities for students, the internship requirement, and a new “Finish in Four” program. However, the assessment process for academic programs is still incomplete and not routinely used for program improvement. Course syllabus should clearly state program learning outcomes and student learning outcomes, and explain how the outcomes are measured. Reliance on the VSC system of assessment as a substitute for JSC internal program assessment is a concern.

7. Institutional Resources

Human Resources: The dean of administration leads the Human Resources Department. Johnson State College (JSC) employs 296 people with forty-four full-time and eighty-six part-time faculty. The College employees belong to five collective bargaining units within three representative organizations: the Vermont State Employees Association, Vermont United Professionals, and the American Federation of Teachers. The employer of record is the Vermont State Colleges System (VSC), with bargaining authority located at the System level.

The payroll and benefit processing function and definition is located at the System office. The College employs a chief human resource officer (role filled on an interim basis by the Dean of Administration) and a payroll and benefits administrator. It appears that other human resource functions of training and professional development are administered at the local campus, but the restrictions on resources limit the availability of these services.

Overall, the College has seen a reduction of thirty-six employees since 2013, including a reduction in full- and part-time faculty. This reduction has occurred in response to more than six years of reductions in enrollment and flat state support. Tuition increases have not kept up with inflation. Administrative and academic departments have seen employee and budget cuts that have decreased the resources available to meet the institution’s enrollment and retention challenges.

Financial Resources: As a component unit of the VSC, JSC’s financial statements are audited and consolidated in the financial statements of the VSC by the accounting firm of O’Connor and Drew. The Dean of Administration serves as the chief financial officer. The financial services office consists of a controller, accounts receivable supervisor, and two student services consultants. Accounts payable is handled by the VSC, and centralization of services within the System has allowed the College to share costs of some back-office functions and enterprise-wide software packages.

State funding for operating expenses has been flat in recent years. In about 2008, the VSC borrowed \$72 million, of which JSC accessed \$11.5 million; the College remains responsible for the repayment of this principal. These factors, coupled with a decrease in enrollment, have put pressure on the resources available to the College with which to address sustainability in several areas. The enrollment management plan includes aggressive targets, and key staff expressed pessimism regarding the College's ability to achieve its enrollment and financial goals in the near term. Neither do projected increases in enrollment appear to be adequate to reverse the long-term resource issues at the College.

Tuition is set by the Board of Trustees one year prior to the approval of the budget. The budget recommendation goes from the president to the Board of Trustees. The chancellor acts as an advocate, for the funding approved by the Board of Trustees, to the State Legislature.

The budget process at the College, which involves the president and cabinet, does not appear to be inclusive, which was a conscious decision because of the lack of new resources to allocate. Yet, it could be to the College's benefit to allow full participation in the budget process in order to establish new baselines of activity directly tied to available resources. The College has not recently tied budgets to a strategic plan. The College is currently projecting the exhaustion of its strategic reserve by FY18.

The stewardship of JSC's fiscal activities has adhered with the policies of the VSC. Separation of duties and checks and balances have been maintained during the reduction of staff and financial resources. The financial aid office has experienced clean audits in the years available for review. The College has shown an ability to manage this important function effectively during a period of financial and enrollment uncertainty. College leadership is optimistic about its financial future, and it is currently working with the VSC chancellor to explore options that could lead to a more secure future.

Information, Physical, and Technological Resources: These three areas have seen budget and personnel reductions over the past six years, and they are currently resourced at a lower level than the other four Vermont state colleges. Library operational hours and staff have been hit hard by the need to reduce expenses. All library staff, except the faculty librarian, are employed at 80 percent of full time. Budget reductions have also necessitated the reduction of hours of operation. The library has been able to reallocate its acquisition budget by reducing print journals, microforms, and non-streaming media, and increasing digital resources. They have also been assisted by a multi-institution approach to resource acquisition within the VSC.

The physical plant has seen a reduction in staff over the last six years, while continuing to maintain 379 acres and fourteen buildings plus a multi-building apartment complex. They are also the System custodians of one thousand acres of nature preserve, including some cabin structures that are maintained by the College. Approximately \$11.5 million of investment was made in the campus with the 2006 Facilities Master Plan as the guide for priorities. The College receives about \$250,000 yearly from Vermont for investment in its physical plant. The College has the flexibility to roll this money into the next year in order to undertake larger projects.

Most of the College's physical spaces are well maintained and in good condition, and the investments based on the 2006 master plan have extended the life of the College's physical assets. Some academic buildings show façade and window issues that will need to be addressed in the near future, but are typical of 1970s-vintage building issues. Parking lots and pedestrian paths will soon need to be addressed. Residence halls do not have functioning elevators, which seriously limits accessibility, although the first floor of one residence hall does have accessible rooms and restroom facilities. The athletic fields are a focus for improvement and possible fundraising activity. The College could benefit from an amended or new facilities master plan to focus future investment in the campus's physical assets.

Capital expenditures are based on recommendations from the facilities director and the dean of administration, in conjunction with the president and the VSC. A representative committee to increase participation in prioritization of projects was recently implemented, but the extent to which that process is data driven is unclear.

Technological resources is down two positions and also has seen budget reductions. Limited budgets and staffing have led to reliance on student workers to respond to Tier 1 help desk issues. Computers and servers are not refreshed in a timely fashion; faculty members waited seven years before recently receiving new desktop computers. Classrooms are not equipped with many technology resources, and all computer labs need to be refreshed over the next two years. Repairs and maintenance of owned equipment is slow and hindered by the lack of staff resources. The VSC does supply support for the ERP (Colleague). Technology staffs that support that enterprise application, as well as the contract for the product and services, are located at the VSC System office. The five institutions of the system equally share the cost.

Successful implementation of JSC's new academic initiatives will require additional resource allocation for Wiley Library and the technology office. The JSC Technology Task Force should work with staff to develop a prioritization of tasks mapped to resources, in order to plan for the coming years.

Overall, the College has experienced a reduction in human and financial resources that has affected its ability to fully support existing and new initiatives. The proposed unification of Johnson State and Lyndon State could increase human resources in the short term, but further developed plans are needed to measure the probability of increasing financial resources.

8. Educational Effectiveness

Since its last NEASC ten-year visit and its five-year interim report, Johnson State College (JSC) has made modest progress in its efforts to demonstrate educational effectiveness. The institution has made some headway in developing outcomes and ways of measuring the success of many of its academic programs and certain other features of its curriculum. Significant work remains to be done to systematize assessment and data use, and the institution is forthcoming about its shortcomings in addressing institutional effectiveness.

Outcomes and Expectations of a JSC Education: JSC generally makes clear its expectations for student learning and the outcomes students can expect to achieve at the institutional and program levels. The institution adheres to VSC graduation goals and standards of writing, quantitative reasoning, information literacy, and oral communication, all of which appear in the course catalogue. Designed to meet the VSC graduation standards, JSC's general education program has three goals adopted from the AACU's *College Learning for the New Global Century*: broad knowledge of human cultures and the natural and physical worlds, intellectual and practical skills, and integrative learning.

Undergraduate programs have learning outcomes, most of which are explicated in the course catalogue; however, they vary in their level of clarity and specificity. Some, like the psychology program, have very general learning goals, while others are far more detailed, such as mathematics. Most graduate programs also have learning outcomes. (Note: The series-E forms states, in error, that the MFA program in Studio Arts has no established learning outcomes. Those learning outcomes, however, are available in JSC's catalogue.)

Strategies for Measuring Educational Effectiveness: JSC has several sources of data at its disposal for measuring its effectiveness, both from its own data collection efforts and the VSC System office. The institution has been particularly proactive in seeking student input whenever possible in its appraisal of its services and programs. However, JSC has not devoted much attention to the methodological soundness of its strategies or to the analysis of results. The institution continues to rely heavily on anecdote and informal interactions with students. Because of JSC's small size and close student-faculty/staff interaction, such feedback may prove useful in many cases, but the institution would benefit from a more structured approach.

Retention and graduation rates are one set of indicators JSC uses to monitor its effectiveness. These are examined in comparison with institutions in Vermont and similar institutions nationally, and methodology for selecting national peers for retention and graduation analysis is well documented in the VSC Institutional Profile. Rates have increased somewhat in recent years, but the institution recognizes that additional improvement is needed on both measures. The most recent available one-year retention rate is 69 percent, an increase from 62 percent three years ago and the high-50's several years ago, and the most recent six-year graduation rate available is 35 percent, which is down slightly from 37 percent three years ago but up from 31 percent five years ago. JSC's retention and graduation rates are below those of some of the other VSC institutions.

Retention and graduation rates are available for specific student populations that are especially important to JSC's mission, such as Pell recipients, first-generation students, and students enrolled in the EDP, and many of the numbers have been encouraging. The VSC report shows that Pell recipients and first-generation students graduate in proportions that are often considerably better than their non-Pell and non-first-generation counterparts. Most recently, the graduation rate for Pell recipients was 45 percent (compared to 27 percent for non-Pell), while the rate for first-generation students was 36 percent compared to 38 percent for non-first-generation students. Athletes have done especially well at JSC; most recent rates are 75 percent for retention and 51 percent for graduation. The series-S forms present

retention and graduation rates for graduate students, showing some fluctuation over the past few years.

On the other hand, some slippage is evident in the retention and graduation rates for EDP presented in the series-S forms. Three years ago, 76 percent of EDP students were retained; the most recent rate is 64 percent. And while EDP retention rates had been higher than on-campus transfer students' retention rates, the opposite is now true. With respect to graduation, the rate has decreased from 61 percent to 55 percent, but it is higher than the on-campus transfer students. One population for which retention and graduation rates are not accessible presently is residential students; the residence life director explained that Colleague does not permit easy linking of retention rates with resident/commuter status. However, he believes that on-campus students retain and graduate in higher proportions.

Evidence suggests that JSC's programs targeted at low-income students are increasing their success. Pell-eligible students retain at higher rates than their non-Pell-eligible peers: 74 to 63 percent for the FY08 cohort; 76 to 53 percent for the FY07 cohort; and 72 to 60 percent for the FY06 cohort. The graduation rates for these students show similar trends: 45 to 27 percent, 43 to 32 percent, and 39 to 29 percent, respectively. As noted by the former academic dean, JSC has developed successful support initiatives for at-risk students, but they have been less successful in supporting those in the "murky middle."

One initiative with promise that stands to serve all students is the first-year, themed learning communities established in fall 2015, which have resulted in significant increases in first-to-second year retention of 76 percent and 82 percent for these students as compared to the overall 68 percent across the FY15 cohort. One student enrolled in a learning community as a first-year student indicated that being part of this even smaller cohort added to the sense of community at JSC and was an important factor in her transition and success. College personnel generally agree that these learning communities, at an approximate cost of \$6,500 each, are one of JSC's most cost-effective retention tools, and they are seeking to identify additional resources to ramp up this program to serve more first-year students.

According to the registrar (who also serves as the lead institutional researcher) and the interim dean of students, recent analysis of the reasons that students drop out of JSC has been sparse. But there is no shortage of theories for explaining the low retention rates among faculty and staff, such as the large number of financially needy students, students' lack of family support, and the challenge (or lack thereof) of the courses offered. When students leave the institution, JSC conducts a brief exit interview on very general reasons for student departure. However, the information gathered is not analyzed or used. On a positive note, JSC is beginning to work with the Education Advisory Board's *Student Success Collaborative* to identify very specific types of students at risk of dropping out. Determining ways to improve retention could go a long way to solving some of the enrollment challenges the institution is facing.

The institution also gathers information on its success in preparing students for employment and other post-graduate activities. The most recent survey found that 94 percent of respondents reported being employed or enrolled in further education; three-quarters are employed in a job directly related to their JSC major. The survey tracks employment

outcomes of graduate and EDP students as well. Finally, student debt and default rates are available in the VSC performance indicators. Most recent data are for the 2013-14 academic year and show that 79 percent of baccalaureate recipients graduate with debt, and the average amount of debt is \$29,843; neither figure is the highest or lowest in the VSC system.

Other sources of institutional effectiveness data the institution highlights include results of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The self-study references the high rating that students gave to their relationship with faculty relative to peer institutions as a positive finding and the relatively low level of academic challenge as a negative. However, the last administration of NSSE was in 2011. Data were shared with faculty, according to the former academic dean, but other segments of the JSC community, such as the staff, indicated that they have not seen those results, which are now five years old.

The institution has performance-based assessment strategies in place for the four areas of the VSC graduation standards that include examinations that must be passed to demonstrate competency. Data have been analyzed fairly extensively for the writing standard, which is measured through an exam that faculty blindly assess. Pass rates on the exam have held fairly steady at 70 percent. For the math competency, students can take either an examination or a course; pass rates have ranged between 69 percent and 80 percent since 2010. No mention was made about how data for the other competencies are analyzed.

While JSC assesses progress on the graduation standards, the institution openly admits that assessment of the general education program is in its early stages. In the self-study report, JSC states that the faculty are just beginning to explore ways of determining the effectiveness of the new program. A discussion with the newly reformulated Program Assessment Committee revealed that there are preliminary plans to develop an assessment protocol for general education that will involve focus groups with graduating students, an exit survey of these same students, and a review of student work in general education classes.

At the program level, JSC uses the revised VSC program review process (PReCIP) as its primary framework for monitoring program quality. The increased focus on program improvement in this process is a positive change over the former protocol, which was more of a pro forma exercise. Despite the greater focus on improvement, however, only a few programs have relatively sophisticated assessment strategies in place, while several others have only rudimentary procedures.

Another concern is that existing program assessment focuses largely on capstone experiences, while very little is being done at the mid-point of students' careers in their majors. According to a professor present at the open session for faculty, the psychology department administers the Psychology GRE to its seniors and uses the results to identify gaps in the curriculum. A number of other programs, such as Anthropology/Sociology, give seniors surveys that ask them to read statements that reiterate a program outcomes and respond on a dichotomous scale. However, responses to such questions are not likely to offer faculty much guidance in how to improve the curriculum so that students can better achieve outcomes. Some of the richer sources of data on program effectiveness are qualitative strategies such as guided conversations between the academic dean and senior majors that are part of the program review process; the former dean explained that he had many years' worth of data from these

conversations and that had helped inform many curricular adjustments. Rather than using PReCIP, the teacher education program follows standards mandated by the Vermont Department of Education, and they have a very specific measure of success: passage rates on the Vermont Teaching Licensure Recommendation. The Series-S forms show that these scores have improved dramatically over the past three years, from 39 to 80 percent.

Additional aspects of the curriculum and co-curriculum at JSC have been subject to some assessment as well, namely features of the first-year experience. Several surveys are administered regularly focused on the first-year seminar, advisement, and quality of life in the residence halls.

Data Sharing and Use of Assessment Results for Institutional and Program

Improvement: In some cases, faculty and staff at JSC use assessment results and other measures to adjust the curriculum or other aspects of the student experience; however, what is being done happens in an *ad hoc* and uncoordinated manner. For example, athletics is one area in which data analysis drives program improvements. The athletics director and his staff regularly use data on term-to-term persistence to improve support services to athletes and ultimately improve their retention, GPA's, and graduation rates. Another example is the analysis of graduation rates for students participating in internships, which has revealed that they are a particularly effective tool for promoting student completion. This analysis prompted JSC to encourage students to become involved in these high-impact practices as early as possible in their college careers. Also, the former academic dean mentioned that results from his guided conversations were instrumental in the re-design of the general education program. For example, when students indicated that the previous program was inflexible and the connections among courses ambiguous, the new program was designed to have a far greater interdisciplinary focus. And finally, the residence life staff administers a quality of life survey that led to JSC's creation of gender-neutral housing.

Several academic departments can point to courses that were added or changed as a result of feedback received during the review process. For example, the management program has started to place more emphasis on team responsibility, based on what they heard from industry leaders. The English department has used the results of the writing competency to improve the content of the foundational courses, leading to increased pass rates on the exam.

While assessment findings sometimes do spur program improvement at JSC, they are not commonly used at the broader institutional level to drive planning or make resource allocation decisions. The current strategic plan has a variety of laudable goals, and activities related to each of these goals is tracked, but it is not clear that data from assessment activities drove the planning process or are used to monitor progress on the plan. One exception is that the first priority ("Increase academic challenge and student achievement") was put forth based on the College's low performance on the NSSE indicator "Level of Academic Challenge" mentioned earlier. However, for the most part, the institutional planning process cannot be accurately described as data-informed. In fact, the registrar was not aware of any studies that undergirded the formulation of the strategic plan. And when asked whether data is used for planning, several staff members answered "No," and then went on to explain the challenges they have in accessing data they would need for planning. The registrar also noted that while discussion has taken place on the need to develop metrics to assess progress on the plan's

goals, none have been created as yet.

Capacity for Monitoring Institutional Effectiveness: The self-study and discussions with faculty and staff reveal that cultural and practical factors make full adoption of assessment and data-driven decision-making at JSC challenging. While faculty and staff reportedly have an inclination towards action rather than reflection, with a strong desire to serve students and address their immediate needs, some have not yet bought into the importance of assessment to ensure program and institutional quality.

In addition, the College lacks adequate institutional research capacity to ensure that data are regularly used for assessment and planning. The registrar is generally able to respond to faculty and staff requests for data when they arise, but few standard reports are produced for the campus community on a regular basis. In the coming months, the registrar will be receiving some assistance from a math faculty member who will have a part-time assignment in the registrar's office. It is expected that this faculty member will help with moving the work of the institutional research function towards greater analysis.

9. Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure

Integrity: Johnson State College (JSC) has striven to address integrity and behavior on campus through the creation of a range of campus policies and committees, including but not limited to the Student Code of Conduct, the Student Handbook, the Faculty Contract, an Academic Freedom Policy, the JSC Academic Status Committee, and the Institutional Review Board. In addition, the VSC has policies in place regarding ethical behavior that complement those of JSC, including a whistleblower policy and a policy on Sexual Harassment and Unprofessional Conduct.

JSC also adheres to state policies, including the State of Vermont's public disclosure policy and the guidelines in the System's 1961 charter. In addition, JSC makes available information regarding federal policies including FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act), the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Cleary Act for reporting crime on campus, as well as Federal Title IV of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and Title IX of the 1972 Education Act. Both Title IV and Title IX prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, or national origin by public elementary and secondary schools and public institutions of higher learning.

Taken together, these policies guide JSC in striving to uphold ethical behavior in all of their programs and activities, whether on campus, off campus, or online. Furthermore, these policies are designed to guarantee rights not only of the campus community; they also extend to any programs sponsored by JSC and they apply to invited guests or visitors.

The new Integrated Marketing Task Force, one of the seven task forces recently established by the president, will soon be considering the efficacy of institutional branding and message cohesion regarding the unification of Johnson State and Lyndon State.

Transparency: The JSC website, the MyJSC portal, and various social media applications are the primary platforms employed by the College to communicate information to the campus and its community. However, in the absence of any surveys, it isn't clear how effective JSC is at keeping constituents apprised of issues of importance to the campus. For example, coordination of planning and communication of results to the campus in a timely fashion appear to be a challenge. JSC also recognizes that its print and digital publications have not always been current and readily accessible, but this appears to be due in part to their thin level of staffing.

In her first year in office, President Collins addressed this issue by conducting a series of campus listening tours. Initially designed as a vehicle by which to gather information and learn about the campus, the listening tours also provided the president with an opportunity to share information about the proposed unification with Lyndon State. The general feedback regarding those events was that the president's honesty and forthrightness were much appreciated by the staff and faculty, likely helping to alleviate anxiety about the proposed restructuring of the two colleges.

Public Disclosure: JSC revamped its website in 2013, at which time the external-facing website became the College's primary vehicle for conveying information to prospective students and their families. The JSC website includes links to a range of information including admission, the cost of attending, retention and graduation rates, undergraduate and graduate College catalogs, directories of faculty and staff, and various planning documents. There are numerous photographs of the campus, which present a realistic picture of the nature and extent of the facilities at JSC. A separate website, the MyJSC portal, is available for use only by current students, faculty, and staff. This website also provides secure access to a range of separate information services such as class schedules, and it links to "Moodle," the campus course management system.

The website also includes links to the VSC website, which contains comparative data relating to demographics of the student body of the five VSC colleges, financial information, and audited financial statements. Like many institutions using this approach, JSC faces challenges in ensuring that the information is accurate on both sites, and the all required state and federal policies and information are available on the correct site(s). This is compounded by the fact that the VSC System office produces much of the data required under the NEASC Standards for public disclosure and houses it on the VSC website, which requires continual vigilance to ensure the links are correct and consistent.

The vast majority of JSC's print and online publications are produced by the Marketing and Communications Department, which reports directly to the president. The department employs Google Analytics to track usage of its web-based tools. For the campus's external-facing website and the MyJSC portal, Marketing and Communications makes extensive use of social media tools and platforms to connect with students. This includes the creation of a social media calendar and products such as Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, YouTube, and SquareSpace. The department is also responsible for creating and distributing videos produced on campus and sharing this content on several of the social media platforms.

Regarding some of the information contained on the website, there appear to be issues of

timeliness and organization, both of which might relate to resource limitations and the small staff in marketing and communications. For example, while the College claims to periodically review its own policy manual, this hasn't been done since 2010.

Undergraduate and graduate catalogs are available online for the current year and up to six years of previous catalogues are archived online. JSC's website and catalogues describe the institution consistent with its mission statement and set forth the obligations and responsibilities of both students and the institution. JSC acknowledges, however, that it has faced challenges in the timely production of their College catalog. The result is that course listings and descriptions are not entirely accurate or up to date, which is a source of frustration for students seeking to complete their degrees in a timely fashion.

The College recognizes that it needs to develop a systematic process of periodic review for all of its publications, print and digital, and it has committed to work on improving both platforms and their related processes. However, no timeframe has yet been established. As a testament to this effort, the Marketing and Communications staff recently completed the construction of a webpage on public disclosure, which is modeled after a similar webpage at Castleton University. It expands on the information cited in the self-study and provides a central location for links to a wide range of public disclosure documentation, ranging from price of attendance (tuition, fees, room and board) and a net price calculator, to student outcomes (e.g. retention rates), financial aid, student loan information, and policies regarding vaccination, campus security, and annual campus crime statistics.

The Student Handbook is up to date with rules and regulations for student conduct and procedures for student appeals and complaints. This handbook is available for download from the website and is clearly indexed and written to provide students with information about College, State, and Federal policies.

JSC publishes the names of instructional faculty and staff, their contact information, and departmental/program affiliation in an online directory; biographies and credentials of full-time faculty are available. The names and positions of JSC's senior administrative officers and organizational charts are readily available on the homepage. Information about the VSC Board of Trustees is found through a link to the VSC website.

JSC publishes its status as a public institution within the VSC and its mission, objectives, and expected general education outcomes. JSC meets the standards regarding public disclosure of admissions requirements, procedures, and policies, and those related to the transfer of credit, as well as current student fees, charges, and refund policies. Policies related to attending or withdrawing from the institution are published on the website and in the Student Handbook, which is the source for most of the more detailed information about procedures relevant to various policies.

JSC acknowledges that a summary of educational expectations for JSC students, and an easily discoverable single page with links to all JSC policies and procedures and a listing of institutions with which the College has articulation agreements is lacking. Documentation of program excellence, job placement percentages, and learning outcomes exist across the website, but not yet in a single, aggregated location.

JSC publishes a description the campus setting, the availability of academic and other support services, the range of co-curricular and non-academic opportunities available to students, and those institutional learning and physical resources from which a student can reasonably be expected to benefit. Information about the size and characteristics of the student body is generally available, while more detailed demographic information is available through the VSC in annual comparative reports about the institution.

JSC's Financial Aid website provides clear and comprehensive evidence about the total cost of education and net price for students based on their entry status (in-state, out-of-state, etc.); the availability of financial aid, including grants, loans, and scholarships, including information on those sources that must be repaid. Information about average student debt upon graduation, cohort default and loan repayment rates are published in various reports elsewhere on the website.

JSC's statements about its current accredited status are accurately and explicitly worded. Non-discriminatory policies and practices are fully in effect and are guided by system policy as well as employment group contracts. JSC also publishes many ways in which students can report a concern, dependent upon the nature of the concern

In general, it appears that JSC publicly discloses a complete and accurate picture of the College, its programs, resources, policies and procedures, which is widely available to appropriate internal and external constituents.

Affirmation of Compliance

To document the institution's compliance with Federal regulations relating to Title IV, the team reviewed Johnson State College's Affirmation of Compliance form signed by President Elaine Collins.

- **Credit hour policy:** As discussed in Standard 4: *The Academic Program*, the team's review of course schedules and syllabi for a cross-section of JSC's course offerings, both classroom and online, found the assignment of credit reflective of the College's policy and consistent with the Commission's standards.
- **Credit transfer policies and articulation agreements:** JSC publicly discloses on its website and other relevant publications its policy on transfer of credit, although a list of institutions with which it has articulation agreements is not readily available.
- **Student complaint procedures:** Procedures for student appeals and complaints are included in the Student Handbook, which is available for download from the website. A student can file a complaint about any matter with the College's Student Concern Committee, chaired by the Interim Dean of Students, and the matter will be brought to the appropriate area for resolution.
- **Verification of student identity for distance and corresponding education:** Students enrolled in online courses must sign into their course or exam with an individualized username and password to gain access, which ensures that the student who registered for the course is the same one participating in it. It is a policy violation for a student to share

account information with anyone.

- **Public notification of the evaluation visit and opportunity for public comment:** Public notification of the evaluation visit and the opportunity for public comment was made by the College in September 2016, six weeks prior to the team visit. The notification ran in two regional newspapers, the *Stowe Reporter* and the *News & Citizen*, as well as being posted on JSC's website.

Summary

One theme that runs throughout NEASC correspondence with JSC over the past ten years, since the 2005-06 comprehensive review, is the College's need to build and implement a comprehensive assessment program that connects assessment results to program review, institutional and strategic planning, and resource allocation. Assessment writ large, but focused primarily on the teaching-learning experience, is the basis for the evaluation of an institution's effectiveness. The NEASC Policy Statement on Institutional Effectiveness articulates the expectation that an institution's assessment efforts will be "comprehensive, systematic, integrative, and organic."

Johnson State College has made significant progress in its work to develop an assessment plan that will demonstrate institutional effectiveness, and this NEASC review team has reviewed sufficient evidence of the effectiveness of JSC across the full breadth of NEASC Standards for Accreditation. However, such evidence is not yet being collected or used in a "comprehensive, systematic, integrative, and organic" manner. While some departments are doing an excellent job of assessing student learning outcomes and program outcomes, others cite various reasons for their inability and/or reluctance to make assessment a priority. The administration and academic leadership, in order to build capacity for fully demonstrating institutional effectiveness, still needs to identify assessment as a high-level, college-wide priority.

Summative List of Institutional Strengths

- **Strong commitment to student success:** Perhaps the greatest strength of JSC is the high degree of dedication and commitment to student success, which is characteristic of the faculty and staff. JSC has invested considerable resources in the first-year experience—for example, learning communities and professional advisors—which is beginning to pay off in improved first-to-second year retention. The College is to be commended for putting strong emphasis on internships, in every program and not only during the senior year, and JSC graduates have strong employment rates during their first year in the workforce. The mission statement clearly articulates the goal of providing students with an education that transforms their lives, and JSC is achieving that mission.
- **Attractive campus:** A second strength is the campus itself, which is truly a beautiful place. JSC has done a good job in recent years of investing in grounds and facilities, in all the right ways and all the right places. The physical plant is in good shape, and the

students appreciate it. The staff keeps the campus looking good, which is a strong student retention factor.

- **COPLAC membership:** Another strength is JSC's membership in the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges, which was one of President Collins's initial priorities. The College is to be commended for recognizing the value of COPLAC membership and putting together an excellent application in a short period of time. This will be a huge benefit to JSC as they seek to enhance their brand as a liberal arts college, not to mention the many benefits to students that come with COPLAC membership.
- **Diversification of revenue sources:** JSC's entrepreneurial decision to pursue new revenue streams through diversifying the academic enterprise is another significant strength. The College has hired a new associate dean of distance education, and they plan to expand their graduate programs and online offerings with potentially lucrative new degree programs in areas where there is strong market demand. They have recognized the critical need for investment in technology and professional training for faculty in distance education. JSC also is moving into the Early College market by opening up classes to Vermont's high school students, which has significant potential for growth in enrollment and much-needed revenue.
- **Student leadership development:** The JSC staff and faculty are doing an excellent job of developing student leadership. The College recently launched a new chapter of the National Society of Leadership and Success, a rigorous program. JSC students are provided with robust opportunities to work independently in planning their own extra- and co-curricular activities, and faculty routinely go the extra mile to provide students with a variety of experiential opportunities, such as conference participation and travel. These things add immeasurably to the value of a student's life and education.
- **Campus-wide voice in governance and planning:** And finally, it is a significant (and perhaps uncommon) strength that during the team visit, practically every student and employee with whom who talked told us that they have an appropriate voice in campus governance. The recent change in leadership, with President Collins's arrival on campus last year, has been positively received, and she has expanded the President's Council and launched the President's Advisory Council, which gives students a voice at the table as well. This open, transparent, and inclusive approach to governance and planning is, and will continue to be, a real asset as the students, staff, faculty, and administration work together to move the College forward.

Summative List of Institutional Concerns

- **Assessment of student learning and program outcomes:** JSC still does not have a strong culture of assessment. In fact, it is this team's opinion that many JSC faculty and staff don't yet have sufficient knowledge of—or experience with—assessment to understand its value. JSC hasn't closed the loop on assessment, despite the fact that the need to do so was cited by CIHE-NEASC at the institution's previous ten-year review. Standard 8.10 says that the findings of the assessment process and measures of student success should be integrated into program evaluation activities on an ongoing basis, and those findings should be used to inform the institution's planning and resource allocation. While this is happening to some extent in some degree programs, it is clearly

not the norm, despite academic assessment's centrality to CIHE-NEASC accreditation.

- **Data-driven planning and decision making:** JSC has an urgent need to generate rapid enrollment growth through not only student recruitment, but also improved retention and persistence to graduation. We applaud the steps that JSC has taken to initiate enrollment growth, and the success that they are starting to see in a few key areas. As efforts to grow enrollment continue, however, the importance of *data-driven* planning and *data-driven* decisions will be essential to help ensure that any expenditure of financial or human resources is done as efficiently and effectively as possible.
- **Planning priorities, measurable goals, and timetables:** Planning is pervasive on the JSC campus. The seven task forces launched by President Collins and the President's Council are addressing appropriate, mission-critical areas of campus operations, and they have already yielded good, if limited, results. Campus planning is also a very inclusive process, involving a wide swath of students, staff, and faculty members. However, JSC still needs to take steps to ensure that future planning, as explicitly stated in the Standards for Accreditation, is based on clearly stated priorities, measurable goals, and a reasonable timetable. Just as with enrollment management, the College must make sure to engage in planning as efficiently and effectively as possible.
- **Financial and human resources:** JSC's enrollment decline has come hand-in-hand with a decline in financial resources, which has had a negative effect across the board. In recent years, JSC has responded to a tightening of financial resources, in part, by reducing the workforce. Several faculty and staff positions have been eliminated or combined, and others have been reduced to part-time status. Many offices on campus are thinly staffed and unable to take on additional duties, which limits the College's ability to invest time and energy into planning initiatives. By necessity, JSC has increased its dependency on adjunct faculty, which increases the workload, particularly in advising and committee assignments, for the full-time faculty. In short, the lack of stable financial and human resources is hampering JSC's ability to grow and be successful, but without growth and success, the College has no way of generating additional financial and human resources.

To its credit, JSC has begun to look beyond the macro to the micro, for narrowly focused, low-cost, strategically selected areas of potential enrollment growth, such as new programs, online education, and early college students. College personnel also acknowledge that the least expensive way to increase enrollment is by improving student retention and persistence. They are advocating for increased support from the state legislature and trustees, and becoming more entrepreneurial about pursuing grants and other third-party funding sources.

It must be noted, however, that JSC cannot be successful without finding ways to achieve long-term financial sustainability and rebuild its workforce to appropriate levels. Ultimately, nothing poses a more serious threat to the College's long-term ability to meet the Standards for Accreditation than a lack of sufficient financial and human resources.