Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students

of

COLLEGE OF THE ATLANTIC
Bar Harbor, Maine

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 site visit to the campus on
October 22-25, 2017

The members of the team:

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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: Oct 20, 2017____

Name of Institution: College of the Atlantic

1. **History:**   Year chartered or authorized __1969___   Year first degrees awarded __1973_____

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

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						
Baccalaureate	328	11	335	76%	66%	82
Graduate	4	1	4.67	100%	25%	4

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

5. **Student debt:**

	Most Recent Year	**One Year Prior**	**Two Years Prior**
Three-year Cohort Default Rate	3.7%	1%	2.9%
Three-year Loan Repayment Rate			

	Associate	**Baccalaureate**	**Graduate**
Average % of graduates leaving with debt		45%	25%
Average amount of debt for graduates		24,523	41,000

6. **Number of current faculty:**   Full-time __26__ Part-time __20___ FTE __33.8___

7. **Current fund data for most recently completed fiscal year:** (Specify year: ___YR16____)
    (Double click in any cell to enter spreadsheet. Enter dollars in millions, e.g., $1,456,200 = $1.456)

Tuition	$13.709	Instruction	$3.956
Gov't Appropriations	$0.000	Research	$1.685
Gifts/Grants/Endowment	$6.717	General	$2.382
Auxiliary Enterprises	$2.382	Auxiliary Enterprises	$1.624
Other	$4.000	Other	$13.746
Total	$22.812	Total	$23.393

8. **Number of off-campus locations:**
    In-state __0___   Other U.S. __0___   International __0__   Total __0___

9. **Number of degrees and certificates offered electronically:**
    Programs offered entirely on-line __0___   Programs offered 50-99% on-line __0___

10. **Is instruction offered through a contractual relationship?**
    ☐ No   ☒ Yes   Specify program(s): _National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS), Center for Ecological Living and Learning (CELL), Sea|mester _____

Introduction

The 2017 evaluation of the College of the Atlantic (COA) is a comprehensive evaluation, following the College's fifth year report in Fall 2012, submitted to and accepted by the Commission in September 2012. This evaluation also follows a report on awarding credit submitted by the College in Spring 2013, along with additional information submitted in January 2014, that was accepted by the Commission in April 2014.

Throughout the Evaluation Team's visit, all members of the COA community were candid in their comments and offered full assistance to the team. The individuals with whom the team met were well aware of the self-study report and the purpose of the team's visit. Extensive meetings were conducted on a one-on-one basis and with small groups with representatives and leaders from all areas of the College including faculty, students, trustees (which included alumni), and staff. A meeting was held for trustees only, with six trustees in attendance including the Secretary of the Board and the chairs of the finance and investment committees.

The team members met with approximately 26 members of the administrative staff including the president and all senior administrators, 13 members of the faculty, and 18 students, which included both undergraduate and graduate students. Two open meetings were conducted for faculty and one each for staff and students. These meetings were attended by 6 faculty, 9 staff, and 18 students. Four team members visited the College's separate Beech Hill and Peggy Rockefeller Farms.

The Evaluation Team found the self-study report and the other materials provided in advance and during the visit to be sufficiently comprehensive and an accurate description of the state of the College, though there were some minor discrepancies noted between the data presented in the narrative and the supporting data provided. The Evaluation Team appreciates the responsiveness of the College in providing additional materials to support discussion topics that arose during the visit. A review of these documents before and during the team's visit to COA, the chair's preliminary visit the semester before the on-site evaluation, and the team's visit to campus together have provided the basis for the information and evaluative judgments contained in the nine sections of this report which address the *Standards for Accreditation* of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

1. Mission and Purposes

College of the Atlantic (COA) was founded in 1969 and began operation in 1972. As noted in the self-study, "The founding trustees designed a college that expanded the liberal arts, one that prepared students to apply their learning to improve prospects for a sustainable, peaceful, and just society." This vision has remained consistent throughout the history of the college and serves as a major differentiator of COA from other liberal arts colleges.

The mission statement in the self-study reads:

College of the Atlantic enriches the liberal arts tradition through a distinctive educational philosophy—human ecology. A human ecological perspective integrates knowledge from all

academic disciplines and from personal experience to investigate—and ultimately improve—the relationships between humans and the college's social and natural communities. The human ecological perspective guides all aspects of education, research, activism, and interactions among the college's students, faculty, staff, and trustees. The College of the Atlantic community encourages, prepares, and expects students to gain the expertise, breadth, values, and practical experience necessary to achieve individual fulfillment and to help solve problems that challenge communities everywhere.

This mission statement is virtually unchanged since the visit of the previous Evaluation Team in 2007. The faculty have discussed at various times during the history of the college whether or not the focus on human ecology is still relevant and desirable, and each time it has been reaffirmed. For example, in the recent planning process related to academic priorities considerable time was spent on discussing human ecology and the conclusion reached was that both this and an interdisciplinary curriculum remain at the heart of the college.

Throughout all of the team's conversations with faculty, staff, students and trustees it was readily apparent that this mission is understood and embraced by all. It clearly guides the content and delivery of the curriculum and is a driving force for shaping the student experience and even the way the College is organized and its governance. The mission provides a distinctive niche for the College and is both a point of pride and a guide to its goals for the future.

The mission statement appears in the appropriate print materials and on the College's website. Moreover, the recently updated College website highlights COA's niche and unique character. The development of the website was a collaborative project that involved all parts of the campus community, working together with a professional design firm.

The lengthy mission statement and the fact that "human ecology" is not always understood by those just being introduced to the concept can make it difficult for the Admission Office to effectively communicate to prospective students and their families. Print materials are in the process of being updated to facilitate a greater understanding of College's missions and goals using the new website as a model.

2. Planning and Evaluation

Over the last ten years, the College of the Atlantic has been guided by successive planning documents: the 2005-2010 "Strategic Plan," the 2011-2015 "Strategic Design," and the 2016-2021 COA MAP of Strategic Priorities adopted by the All College Meeting (ACM) (May 2015) and affirmed by the Board of Trustees (August 2015). The MAP is the result of a two-year effort guided by the president to chart the College's future as it approached its 50th anniversary. The MAP is a complex and comprehensive list of goals that the College community will need to work together to plan for, implement and evaluate over the next five years. It encompasses 29 broad priorities organized into four areas (academic, enrollment, academic reputation and alumni support) as well as areas identified as "pre-conditions" to the success of the planning process. Of these last areas, planning for a sustained, balance budget (goal 27) and for the 50th anniversary capital campaign (goal 29) are identified as most critical.

By its own admission, the MAP is less of a strategic plan and more of an amalgam of planning, identifying benchmark goals and guiding assumptions. For this reason, while the present plan has emerged from the active and deliberative engagement of trustees, faculty, staff and students in the planning process, the MAP initiatives are not clearly prioritized and some appear to not have a data-driven measurable plan of evaluation. As such, it is not a true strategic plan. Yet, the MAP plan represents real progress on the steps that the institution has taken to develop a comprehensive institutional plan as requested following the 2007 comprehensive evaluation and the 2012 fifth-year interim report. It has been communicated to the campus community with all campus constituencies having the ability to provide feedback on the MAP and the subsequent progress reports. Staff and faculty were positive in their response to the MAP and hoped that it would assist the College to streamline decision-making processes in the future.

Currently, the Registrar also serves a dual-role as the Director of Institutional Research. While this office provides data for the MAP in the area of student records including admission, retention and graduation rates, this office does not provide benchmarking data in other areas such as faculty salaries, student services, etc. The College is commended for creating a part-time institutional research position, however the resources of this office will be stretched given the need to systematically collect and use data to prioritize planning goals in light of the College's limited resources.

Planning: Meeting with senior administration confirmed a realistic approach to planning. In the past, planning was less effective due to trying to address too many strategic goals at once. This approach overextended faculty and staff who already have demanding jobs. For this reason, the College has asked each planning area to focus on only two or three planning priorities each year. In addition, the College hopes to gain more efficiencies by syncing the planning process with the NEASC self-study. Faculty and staff are creating one planning process that will guide future institutional direction and reporting. Finally, while planning has not yet been well integrated with budgeting, senior leaders charged with areas of the plan are working closely with the Administrative Dean to determine the budgetary impact of each goal. The president's cabinet oversees the planning function in collaboration with the Board of Trustees and other College committees. In this way, the existing governance structure is used to monitor the plan.

As a pre-condition to all planning, the College has set a student enrollment target of 350 FTE with a 10:1 faculty ratio. This goal will make it possible to model budget, fundraising, staffing, student housing and food services, energy and transportation needs, facilities, and capital campaign assumptions as part of implementing MAP priorities. Following the decision to seek an enrollment of 350 students, the College has chosen to focus its planning efforts on those priorities that require immediate attention: the academic program, enrollment and retention, financial stability and development goals, facilities and student services. Each of these areas has been tasked with setting its own MAP priorities and reporting progress each year to the president as well as all other campus constituencies. The visiting team reviewed the 2016 and 2017 progress reports.

The MAP plan and the one-year progress reports could benefit from more formal and detailed analysis of external data as part of the evaluation process. For example, an analysis/projection of

the local, regional or national labor market or data about declining high school graduation rates in the Northeast is not documented as part of the plan. Such a scan of external data is key to strategic planning as it involves an analysis of internal strengths and weaknesses in light of external opportunities and challenges, and the College would do well to more formally evaluate, analyze and document external data and trends to inform institutional priorities.

The Administrative Dean and his staff are to be commended for managing the financial challenges faced by the College, but development of a realistic contingency plan is needed so that COA is able to respond to unforeseen financial and other exigencies.

Evaluation: The 2016 and 2017 MAP progress reports use a visual chart to represent progress from planning to implementation for each of the 29 goals. In some cases, the visual progress chart is supported by COA five-year data as well as comparative data from other schools. In other cases, comparable data is not specified and/or no progress on the goal has been made to date.

At the heart of the College's focus on evaluation is the quality, integrity and effectiveness of the academic program. The first fifteen goals of the MAP plan are focused on the learning environment and some of these (not all) have identified quantitative and qualitative metrics as well as a timeline for implementation during the next five years. The MAP Academic Priorities Group was convened in fall 2015 with the charge to review curricular needs and goals and future faculty needs. Reports and meeting minutes demonstrate that faculty have identified several key findings: maintain and strengthen the COA historical curriculum based on human ecology and put in place strategies to strengthen future faculty appointments, including recommendations on faculty salaries, diversity, retirement, and other areas. Survey data from students, alumni and other partners are used as well in some instances.

The faculty have prioritized two immediate needs in order to implement other goals for the academic program: improving student writing and increasing faculty salaries. The Writing for the Future Working Group has made substantial progress toward recommendations to equip faculty with pedagogical strategies to strengthen student writing in targeted courses. The group also will recommend new methods to assess student writing as a way to measure the success of this initiative. To address the issue of faculty salaries, more benchmark data must be collected in order to fully evaluate the College's progress and determine next steps. The Academic Dean plans to study this issue during his sabbatical in spring 2018.

Beyond the academic program, other MAP goals being evaluated through the use of metrics include admission, diversity, retention, academic reputation (marketing), alumni engagement, future academic space needs, development of a budget model that balances the budget and manages cash flow, and a 50th anniversary capital campaign. The visiting team was impressed with the College's use of supporting data to assess progress in these areas, and COA is encouraged to identify and collect supporting data for all goals of the MAP plan and to clearly identify the metrics that will be used to determine if and when the goal has been achieved.

The College uses evaluation results to inform future planning, resource allocation, and changes to programs and services in some areas. For example, survey data and research results have

resulted in changes to retention and recruitment activities, student health and wellness services, alumni engagement, student housing, and academic program space. As the College works to make planning and evaluation more routine and comprehensive across all departments, it will be in a stronger position to advance its unique mission and educational purpose.

3. Organization and Governance

The operating model for governance at COA is based on a strong commitment to collaborative decision-making processes and broad participatory involvement by all campus constituencies, including students. As stated on the website, "participatory rather than representative, democracy is currently both the philosophic ideal and the practical political model for COA." The result is that governance is exercised inclusively and with transparency, and supports COA's educational mission. Governance is organized so that all members of the College community have the opportunity to contribute feedback and recommendations prior to the adoption of new policies, hires, and initiatives or changes to existing policies.

COA is governed by three interconnected entities: a) the Board of Trustees, b) the president and senior management team, and c) the All College Meeting (ACM), including its standing committees. While the by-laws of the Board of Trustees make clear that the Board has final authority for the College's overall governance and the president has executive authority to manage the affairs of the institution, the ACM has the independence and authority to discuss and take action on any issue. Actions taken by the ACM become campus policy unless modified, suspended or vetoed by the president or Board of Trustees. The governance model at COA was adopted when the College was founded not only as a participatory management tool, but also to model the educational approach of the College that encourages students to be agents of their own learning. While this model makes decision-making less efficient and leads to some confusion about decision-making authority on some issues, faculty, staff and students are unanimous in their support for this form of governance as essential to COA's mission and purpose.

Governing Board: The Board of Trustees is strongly committed to, and has a very clear understanding of, COA's unique mission. A review of by-laws (revised July 2017) and meeting minutes confirms that the Board fulfills its charge to approve and review institutional policies and major new initiatives as well as to exercise fiduciary responsibility for the College. Each year, Board members sign a Conflict of Interest disclosure that confirms that the Board has sufficient independence to fulfill its responsibilities based on the best interests of the institution. The Board meets five times a year with four business meetings and one meeting to celebrate commencement. All recent meetings have had a quorum for the transaction of business.

The Board fulfills its governing responsibility through standing committees (executive, finance, audit, investment, academic policy, building and grounds, development, presidential review, trustees and student experience) and committees appointed for specific purposes (enrollment and building project). To facilitate open communication and dialogue, Board meetings are open to all faculty, staff and students and some faculty and staff serve on Board committees. The president and the moderator of the ACM give reports at each business meeting.

The Board appoints a nominating committee to actively recruit, vet and nominate new Board members. The committee ensures that new members are oriented to the work of the Board and bring needed skills and experiences as well as gender, racial and ethnic diversity. While the Board has had success improving its gender diversity in recent years, it continues to struggle with racial and ethnic diversity. The Trustee Committee regularly oversee self-evaluations of the Board which ensures its own effectiveness. The Presidential Review Committee reviews the performance of the president annually.

The Board strongly affirmed its confidence in the leadership of the president and of the senior management team. While the Board was highly involved in operational matters during the years of presidential transition and serious financial challenges, as a body they have grown in their understanding of their appropriate oversight role and give the president and the senior team proper autonomy to manage the operation of the institution.

Internal Governance: The president has assembled a senior management team who are sufficient in number and qualifications to advance the institution's mission and purpose. The team includes the Academic Dean and Associate Deans, four administrative Deans (administrative, institutional advancement, admission and student life), the Director of Communication and the Executive Assistant to the President. The team meets weekly to oversee the operational and strategic functions of the College. Evidence from the self-study and on-campus interviews indicates that they work well as a team and work effectively and collaboratively with the president. One structural issue that remains a challenge to the institution is the role of the Administrative Dean, who must balance managing both financial resources and human resources. On-campus interviews with staff and members of the Personnel Committee indicate support for an independent human resources office.

The Academic Dean is directly responsible to the president and oversees the quality of the academic program. He meets weekly with three associate deans to review the academic program including registration, the assurance of student learning, the graduate program, and allocation of resources to support faculty teaching and scholarship. The faculty have primary responsibility for the curriculum, which is exercised formally through the Academic Affairs Committee (AAC) where new courses, faculty positions, and academic policies are reviewed. This responsibility of the faculty also happens informally through the numerous meetings and conversations that occur among and between the small faculty cohort. Other responsibilities of the faculty are clearly laid out in the Faculty Manual.

The ACM ensures the appropriate consideration of student, staff and faculty perspectives on issues related to internal governance. The mission of the ACM is to foster policy review, consultation, community building, education and dialogue. Through its standing committees, the ACM engages the entire campus in some aspect of governance: internal data indicates that 90-100% of faculty and nearly 50% of students and staff have participated in some aspect of governance. The College has made progress in archiving all committee minutes as a record of governance activity at the institution. The most recent periodic review of the governance model occurred in 2006.

4. The Academic Program

Introduction: The College's academic programs are consistent with and serve to fulfill its mission and purposes. The College's sole program of study – Human Ecology – aligns with its mission: to enrich the liberal arts tradition through its distinctive educational philosophy focusing on the relationship among humans and their environments. Such a perspective integrates knowledge from all academic disciplines and personal experience to investigate and improve relationships between human beings and social/natural communities. This perspective permeates the campus, informing the academic program, activism and interactions among the College's students, faculty, staff, and trustees.

The learning outcomes for the academic program cover these broad areas:

1. Creativity: In all endeavors, the ability to imagine and construct novel approaches or perspectives, to be innovative and to invent. This includes the ability to use many different approaches in solving a problem, and to change direction and modify approach, the originality to produce unique and unusual responses, and the ability to expand and embellish one's ideas and projects. This also includes taking intellectual and creative risks and practicing divergent thinking.

2. Critical Thinking: The ability to not only interpret and evaluate information from multiple sources but also to induce, deduce, judge, define, order, and prioritize in the interest of individual and collective action. This includes the ability to recognize one's self-knowledge and its limits, challenge preconceptions, and work with imperfect information.

3. Community engagement: A deep understanding of oneself and respect for the complex identities of others, their histories, their cultures, and the ability to lead and collaborate with diverse individuals, organizations, and communities. This includes the ability to work effectively within diverse cultural and political settings.

4. Communication: The ability to listen actively and express oneself effectively in spoken, written, and nonverbal domains.

5. Integrative thinking: The ability to confront complex situations and respond to them as systemic wholes with interconnected and interdependent parts.

6. Interdisciplinarity: The ability to think, research, and communicate within and across disciplines while recognizing the strengths and limitations of each disciplinary approach.

While there is only one program, each student creates a unique, self-designed pathway within a broad, coherent structure to complete it.

These learning outcomes for the program and the required course of study are communicated in the Course Catalog 2016-2017. The program is designed to be completed within 4 years.

The College has identified the type of student best suited to this academic program and to the way in which it is delivered and that profile is articulated in the description of the College's academic program: students should be passionate about and dedicated to learning; bring both heart and mind to the tasks of learning and living; live in the questions and increase tolerance of uncertainty; playful, open and creative; and act responsibly and with compassion (Catalog p 2).

Assuring Academic Quality: Planning and evaluation of the academic program falls under the authority of the faculty through the Academic Affairs Committee (AAC), and with oversight by the Academic Policy Committee (APC) of the Trustees. Regularly scheduled meetings dedicated to the review of the academic program are a routine part of the role of these groups. The administrators in the academic affairs division, namely the Dean and Associate Deans, are responsible for implementing and providing oversight of the program and its quality.

Observations about student performance are routinely discussed by faculty in venues such as casual conversations and resource area meetings. These observations are used to inform potential changes to courses or other curricular-related matters.

The strategic planning process incorporated the information received via formal committee actions and input from the observations and resultant conversations by faculty members. The result is the MAP (discussed in more detail in Standard 2), which includes goals focused on improving the quality of the academic program, specifically by enhancing students' writing and multi-modal communication skills and assessing the graduate program. Learning outcomes have been established for courses and a rubric for evaluating student writing portfolios has been approved. A faculty team reviews those portfolios and provides feedback to students. The College is currently conducting a pilot assessment of three of the Writing Seminar courses as the next step in assessing writing at the College.

Faculty list learning outcomes on syllabi. Recently, the College conducted a review to see how well-integrated these outcomes are in courses. Faculty were asked to report, for each of their courses, if learning outcomes for the program were (1) intentionally built in, (2) not intentionally built in but a likely outcome, or (3) not an objective. The survey also gathered data on the various pedagogical approaches built into the requirements for things such as independent work, group work, community engagement, writing, etc. Analysis of the faculty-reported data indicated variability in how intentionally learning outcomes are built into courses. The strategic planning process and the MAP seek to address this by identifying specific areas for improvement along with a plan of action to address them. The next step of this assessment project will have faculty provide additional detail on how they are fostering learning outcomes in specific courses.

With the obvious exception of foreign languages, all courses are conducted in English and students who successfully complete the coursework demonstrate appropriate collegiate-level skills in English.

The faculty regularly discuss rigor and learning expectations at faculty retreats. One metric for assuring rigor across the curriculum is to identify the minimum coursework load for all courses. Faculty have established the appropriate amount of contact hours and out of class work required for each course to meet credit hour standards. They have also established criteria for the amount

of time required for independent work and non-credit work, and have appropriately adjusted the expectations and the contact hours so that there is equity across the different types of learning experiences that is appropriate to the content and the pedagogy.

The integrated nature of the curriculum and the collaborative ethos of the campus supports faculty interaction in the classroom and allows them to normalize expectations and rigor in courses. For example, the recent change to the delivery of the Human Ecology core course requires co- and guest teaching by faculty. Faculty also routinely co-teach other courses in the curriculum, providing them with ongoing opportunities to observe one another's pedagogical techniques and to reinforce general expectations.

Maintaining rigor in non-traditional coursework occurs via the approval process for granting credit. This includes review by the Academic Affairs Committee (for group studies), the Academic Advisor Project Director (for independent studies) or the Review and Appeals Committee (for residency and senior projects). Student documentation of their academically engaged hours are reviewed by the supervising official. The College has recently created a new faculty position to review all of the documentation for non-traditional classes to be sure they comply with College policy.

Undergraduate Degree Programs / General Education and Major: COA's BA degree requires 36 credits (courses are 3.33 semester hours each = 119.88 total semester hours) as well as non-credit requirements of a writing portfolio, a human ecology essay and 40 hours of community service. The faculty in the resource areas, the Academic Deans and Registrar, and the Academic Affairs Committee have a procedure in place to ensure that courses are offered each term at the intro and upper levels to allow students to progress through the program in a timely manner for degree completion in four years. The oversight for the content and quality of the curriculum is held with the Academic Policy Committee (APC) and the Academic Affairs Committee (AAC) populated by academic affairs personnel and faculty from across the three resource areas of the curriculum (Arts and Design, Environmental Sciences and Human Studies). In addition, other bodies provide support and evaluation of the curriculum and report to the AAC: the Faculty Committee, the Environmental Science, Human Studies, and Arts and Design Faculty Resource Areas, the group of five Academic Deans, and the Academic Policy Committee of the Board of Trustees.

The College's approach to the design of the single program of study, as well as the means to deliver it, is in full congruence with the College's mission. Embedded within the requirements for the academic program are ten courses of general education requirements. These are the Human Ecology Core Course; six courses, two from each of three resource areas: arts and humanities (2 courses in Arts and Design), sciences/mathematics (2 courses in Environmental Sciences), social sciences (2 courses in Human Studies); a Writing course; a Quantitative Reasoning course; and a History course.

Student writing skills are regularly evaluated by applying the faculty-designed and approved rubric to the work in student portfolios. According to the self-study, the most recent assessment revealed that student writing had improved, but that faculty would like a higher quality of writing as well as student incorporation of a greater variety of mediums and resources. As a result, one

of the goals articulated in MAP is to improve student communication skills and the College has established a plan for doing so. As noted above, the College is currently conducting an assessment of the writing program.

In addition to the general education requirements that provide breadth, students demonstrate depth via their self-designed pathways to meet the programmatic requirements. The Human Ecology program is designed to develop knowledge and skills both in the for-credit coursework and the experiential and reflective learning requirements. The College has developed an inclusive process to assess the program through a variety of means and at different points in the student's progression through the major. Curricular planning subgroups in the different resource and core areas have been formed to address specific issues. The self-study indicates that results of these studies are shared with the faculty and changes are made to content and/or pedagogy as appropriate. However, evidence of these specific assessment projects and examples of results were not included with the self-study materials.

COA conducts indirect assessment of quantitative reasoning skills in that students report via NSSE that they have a lower rate of engagement with this type of coursework. As a result, faculty have plans to incorporate more quantitative work where appropriate. In addition, this gap in the curriculum informed the College's decision to hire a computer scientist who will be able to offer additional quantitative courses. It is commendable that the College is responding to the results of NSSE by adding more content, but the NSSE data itself is not an assessment of student learning in the specific courses where quantitative skills are taught and student achievement of quantitative analysis skills also needs to be adequately assessed.

All students complete a senior project that demonstrates an advanced level of understanding in the specific area of study they choose for their self-designed program. The College has a formal structure with multiple levels of review to support the students and ensure rigor. This begins at the input stage of the process when students provide a written proposal of their project, which is reviewed by a committee. Once approved, students complete the project with both a faculty and student mentor. A narrative assessment of each student's work on the project is completed by the directors and the student also completes a self-evaluation. The College acknowledges that the quality of these projects can vary and has identified as a goal improving the overall consistency across the projects; development of a plan to accomplish this goal will be important.

The design of the academic program clearly supports and is dependent upon close student-faculty interaction and consultation. In addition to the grades students earn in courses, faculty complete narrative assessments of student work. Students are also expected to complete a narrative reflection for both the courses and the experiential aspects of their program. While approximately 50% of students do so for their courses, all must complete these reflections for their senior projects, internships, group studies and independent studies.

Narrative evaluations provide an opportunity for faculty to communicate to both the student and other interested parties (e.g., graduate school admissions committees, parents, prospective employers) important information about a student's learning in terms of understanding, skills, knowledge, and dispositions pertinent to the course subject matter. While there is no systematic or structured expectation that faculty review the narrative evaluations of their advisees, campus

practice is that faculty do consult the narrative evaluations when asked to supervise an independent study as a way of evaluating if the student is adequately prepared.

The College also has an educational studies pathway that students can follow to meet the standards for certification by the Maine State Board of Education: Elementary Education (K-8); and Secondary Education (7-12 in English Language Arts, Life Science and Social Studies). The curriculum was recently reviewed by the State Board and approval to grant teacher certification was renewed through 2020.

Graduate Degree Program: The College offers a single graduate program: M.Phil. in Human Ecology. This graduate degree reflects the College's mission that emphasizes a multi-disciplinary approach to learning. All students complete 18 courses: nine courses that provide the foundation for the degree and nine courses of advanced, independent work, culminating in a work of original scholarship. Students work closely with their advisors and thesis committee to design and complete the program.

There are no dedicated graduate courses; rather students take undergraduate courses and negotiate with each faculty member to determine the additional academic work they will complete to warrant graduate-level credit. Some faculty identified as a concern, however, the lack of clarity to determine the level of work required to merit graduate credit.

Information about the graduate program is on the College's web page, clearly describing COA's independent and multi-disciplinary educational approach. The College does not actively recruit students to the program. Rather, to be eligible for consideration, students must have a proposed topic and a commitment from a faculty member who has agreed to work with them before they submit their application.

The MAP commits to continuing the graduate program in its current format and structure, recognizing that there are students for whom this type of program is most appropriate. Faculty interested in participating are encouraged to do so; thesis advising is not included in their workload.

Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit: The College accepts coursework in transfer toward the degree from other accredited institutions if it meets the following criteria: course content and credit hours align with that offered at the College of the Atlantic and a grade of C or better is earned. Current students must seek pre-approval before taking any coursework at another institution. Transfer students must complete half of their program at the College, and there are limitations on using transfer coursework to meet resource area requirements.

The College is fully transparent and has clear explanations for students in the Catalog regarding the definition of satisfactory progress toward the degree and the status change that will automatically occur if students fail to make satisfactory progress.

The College has a policy regarding expectations of academic integrity and a statement that is included on each syllabus, on the web page and in the printed Catalog. In keeping with the

campus expectation that students will take responsibility for their education, students are expected to seek guidance if they have questions about complex issues of ethical scholarship.

Criteria for assigning grades is clearly articulated in the Catalog and includes an explanation for Credit/No Credit and A-F letter grades.

Compliance with the Credit-Hour Criteria: As noted above, the BA degree requires 36 credits (each are 3.33 semester hours = 119.88 total semester hours) and additional non-credit requirements including a writing portfolio, a human ecology essay and 40 hours of community service. The College offers a substantial number of courses that fit within each of the categories required for degree completion. Students take three classes per 10-week term and attend three terms per year.

The faculty recently conducted a review of the content of courses offered and evaluated the amount of work required for each. As a result, they codified and normalized the workload and amount of work required outside of class for each hour in class and established the expectation that all courses for academic credit require a total of 150 hours of academic work, a combination of seat and out of seat time. Full semester internships that earn academic credit require 450 hours and non-credit internships require 320.

The following guidance is provided to ensure that the various pedagogical approaches meet the standards for courses to earn one course credit (3.33 semester hours).

Lecture/Seminar Classes:

In-class time	3 hours per week direct instruction X 10 weeks = 30 hours
Out-of-class time	12 hours per week course focused study X 10 weeks=120 hours
TOTAL	150 hours of course-engaged time

Lab and Studio Classes:

In-class time:	6-7 hours per week direct instruction (3 lecture and 3-4 hours of lab or studio time) x 10 weeks = 60-70 hours
Out-of-class time:	10 hours per week x 10 weeks = 100 hours
TOTAL:	160-170 hours that students are engaged in academic activities

This criteria that all courses meet the minimum 150 hour criteria for 1 course (3.33 semester hours) was vetted through the College's governance system – first through the College's Academic Affairs Committee (AAC) and then the Academic Policy Committee (APC) of the Trustees – and approved as College policy.

There is a system in place to ensure faculty compliance. Faculty are required to include on the syllabus how the course meets the credit hour criteria, which the Academic Dean reviews at the end of each term. The Academic Dean, in conjunction with the AAC, then reviews the data on compliance at the end of each trimester.

The Academic Dean also conducted a study of students' perceptions of their academically-engaged time, using a random, representative sample of seminar/lecture classes. The participants provided weekly time logs and participated in an open discussion about the amount of academically engaged time undertaken in the class. The student time logs and focus groups showed more engaged time than required in all cases reviewed. The reviewed courses averaged closer to 160 academically engaged hours as opposed to the 150 required. Factors that contributed to the difference included the underestimation of time needed by students to read material and the underestimation of time needed for group work outside of class.

Students proposing non-traditional courses such as independent studies, group studies, residencies, and senior projects must define how the academically engaged expectations will be met. The minimum amount of academically engaged time is based on credits being earned: one credit non-traditional courses (largely independent and group studies) require 150 hours, two credit offerings require 300 hours, and three credit offerings (largely senior projects, internships, and residencies) require 450 hours of academically engaged time. These proposals are reviewed by either the Academic Affairs Committee (group studies); an Academic Advisor Project Director (independent studies); or by the Review and Appeals Committee (residency and senior project) who confirm that there is a plan to meet the required hours. Student are then required to document academically engaged hours, which is reviewed by the faculty of record, the Internship Director, and/or senior project supervisor. Students found deficient do not receive credit for the work until they complete sufficient academically engaged time.

5. Students

Admissions: The objective of the Admission team is to recruit students who are compatible with the College's mission, show intellectual promise, and demonstrate a desire to view knowledge acquisition through the lenses of idealism, civic responsibility, and a commitment to the environment in which they live. During the 2015-2016 academic year, 328 full-time undergraduate students were enrolled at the institution. The total number of full-time undergraduates in the fall of 2017 is 312, representing a 4.8% decline from the previous year.

More than half of the student body is from outside of New England. International students from 46 countries comprise nearly 21% of COA's student body with the majority coming through the Davis United World College scholars program. The College has been attempting to increase the number of domestic students of color by developing relationships with high schools in New York and Connecticut, but the success of this initiative has been minimal. The female/male ratio is 70/30. In recent years, the College has seen a steady increase of female students. The median high school GPA of applicants is 3.5. For Fall 2017, 485 prospective students completed applications with 314 accepted (64.7% acceptance rate) and 79 (25% yield) enrolled. Twenty transfer students were also admitted for Fall 2017. Over the past four years, an average of 22 transfer students per year have matriculated.

Currently, 83% of students receive need-based aid, and the College meets more than 96% of total student need. The average debt load for undergraduates noted in Fall 2017 was $26,723. The six-year graduation rate for all students is 71%, with a goal to be 75% or higher. The College's

current financial aid discount rate is 59% with a goal of decreasing this to 50%, which as acknowledged by senior administrators could be difficult in the short-term.

An enrollment team approach to both recruitment and retention began in the fall of 2013 under new leadership in the Admission Office. Travel for recruitment was reinstated. Applications are reviewed with an aim to recruit students who demonstrate potential for academic success and personal qualities that connect to the mission of the College. An admission committee, made up of current faculty, staff and students read applications and make admission decisions.

In an effort to grow the student population, the College accepted a greater number of students in the fall of 2013, but experienced high levels of attrition. In response, in 2016 a "thrivers study" was conducted to identify key influencers on retention. Members of the new retention team (an offshoot of the enrollment management team) conducted a small study using current students identified by faculty as "star" students to determine what patterns emerged. They found that characteristics such as empathy, passion, and compassion were prominent in these students. The retention team used these characteristics to inform the rubric used to assess each application and to launch both an enrollment and retention analysis. The retention team is also exploring the possibility of expanding the peer mentor program currently in place for first-year international students to the rest of the entering students, and an assessment on how the current mentors are affecting retention could provide important information before the effort is expanded. The retention team is also exploring the possibility of bringing students to campus three weeks prior to the start of the fall term to participate in a program focused on academic success. The main goal of the program would be to develop a relationship among members of the cohort and to identify students who may need extra attention.

Like many colleges, COA relies heavily on its website to recruit prospective students. An extensive redesign of the website was done in 2015 and a committee has been overseeing its content. The College also bought fifty thousand search names of juniors and seniors to directly market to, which has been described by the Admission staff as having a great return on investment. In addition to the website, direct-mail marketing, social media and earned media exposure are key components of the efforts to recruit prospective students.

Student Services and Co-Curricular Experiences: The College provides a broad array of student support services that includes residence life, dining services, health and wellness services, prevention education, student activities, outdoor activities, leadership programs, student conduct, international student services and student support and crisis response.

In the fall of 2008, six new units of green housing opened adding 155 beds to the residential occupancy. Approximately 44% of students live on campus, and are primarily first and second year students. In the meetings with students, the team received positive feedback about the sense of community among those students. The dining facilities are closed on the weekend, and students generally enjoy the weekend community dinners in the on-campus apartments.

Commuter students are by and large actively engaged with campus life, holding work study jobs, eating in the dining hall, etc. The students who commute usually live within a mile or so from campus. The "shoulder season" in the highly tourist-dependent Bar Harbor area creates a

challenge for some commuters. Since the tourist season extends into the fall, student occupancy in area rentals may begin as late as October 15. This seems to be an accepted part of the culture for the College's students. However, it is likely that the lack of sufficient on-campus housing may affect the decision process for students thinking about applying to the College. The College has developed a feasible plan to add 75-80 beds to its housing stock.

All new students participate in a four-day orientation program that has the goals of introducing students to available services, reviewing expectations, explaining the College's values and concept of human ecology, and building relationships with peers. In the fall of 2016, additional emphasis was placed on the role of the faculty advisor and the option students have to build an "advisor team" of faculty members to help navigate different issues. A thorough analysis of the advising structure is being planned for the 2018-2019 academic year. An issue that was identified is the concern students have about some of the more popular advisors being over-extended and therefore unable to take on new advisees. In discussions, some faculty members also expressed their lack of enthusiasm for the current advising structure.

International students have an extra two-day orientation. Students also have the opportunity to participate in a six-day wilderness trip prior to orientation. The Outdoor Orientation Program for Students (OOPS) has been in place for many years and the vast majority of students participate. The new students are divided into small groups that venture out to their camp sites for the week. This program is aimed at relationship-building among the students, faculty, and staff participants and it introduces new students to the natural resources of Maine. Students spoke very highly of OOPS and said that the program enabled them to make new friends while easing their anxiety about fitting in socially.

The Dean of Students oversees all the student services offices, conducts exit interviews with students, serves as the Title IX Coordinator, FERPA Officer and, along with the Academic Dean, arranges accommodations for students with disabilities. A staff member has responsibility for working specifically with the international students, handling the paperwork necessitated by Federal law and connecting them with a host family in the area. Another staff position was recently added to the student life division, somewhat easing the workload.

Co-curricular programs for students are developed with intention, drawing from student surveys and the staff member understanding of the student culture. The Leadership Program is comprised of kayaking expeditions, wilderness trips, service as a resident assistant, and participation in governance. Participation in this program has grown from 8% to 18% of the student body.

Students enjoy the traditional social events that Student Life offers such as the Fireside Fridays, community dinners, and teas. The students express authentic appreciation for the care and thoughtfulness of the student life staff in their desire to create opportunities for community building.

The College developed an emergency response plan in 2009 and has recently employed an outside consultant to help revise it. Student Life has also made a concerted effort to assess their services using a health and wellness rubric. A campus climate survey, administered over the past five years, showed that students are in need of greater access to mental health counselors and the

College has responded by increasing available counseling hours. Over the past several years, anxiety and depression have surfaced as key issues on the rise.

Policies are created and/or revised by the Student Life Committee (SLC), which is comprised of students. The Dean of Students also sits on this committee. It makes recommendations regarding policy decisions and advises the Dean of Students on issues that affect students' lives outside the classroom. This committee structure has been in place since 2004 and was revised in 2016.

6. Teaching, Learning and Scholarship

Faculty and Academic Staff: The faculty of College of the Atlantic is comprised of 25 full-time, 21 part-time, and 29 adjunct faculty. Other academic staff include three librarians and six staff, including the registrar and director of advising. The categories and expectations of faculty employment are laid out in the Faculty Handbook, which is available on the College's website. Faculty have no rank and there is no tenure system and many individuals fulfill multiple roles. For example, the Academic Deans and Associate Deans teach courses each year and serve as academic advisors. The college president, multiple trustees, and one of the farm managers also teach courses.

A particular classification of part-time faculty is lecturer (N=8). Lecturers receive three year contracts to teach three courses per year, and may also serve as academic advisors, supervise independent studies, advise senior projects, and serve on ad hoc committees. Curriculum vita of lecturers were not reviewed, but the self-study indicates that they also have advanced degree or professional training. These positions are not filled through national searches, whereas full-time faculty positions are filled through national searches.

Adjunct faculty are hired to address specific curricular needs and provide particular professional exposure, whereas lecturer positions are used to support specific, long-term curricular needs. According to the Self-study, 82% of courses are taught by contracted faculty and lecturers and ~12% of courses by adjunct faculty. The eight lecturers are each able to teach up to three courses per year, which comprise ~11% of courses per year. The variety of faculty and instructor positions allows the College to maintain core, contracted faculty, and flexibility to meet current high-demand courses, short-term faculty-leave replacements, and subject area experts.

As a teaching college, the College defines faculty workload primarily by teaching requirements. A full-time faculty contract is for 10 months and the typical teaching load consists of five courses per academic year (with a maximum of two courses per term). Additional faculty responsibilities include membership on one major and one minor governance committee (as assigned by the Academic Dean in consultation with the faculty), curricular planning within their resource area, various individualized student instruction through independent studies, senior projects, reviewing writing portfolios and essays, and other numerous "minor" committees. Faculty are also expected to engage in some sort of professional scholarship, research or creative work. A review of annual work load reports and faculty CVs demonstrated that faculty are very active professionally and remain current in their academic fields.

Full-time and part-time faculty work under long term contracts, with a review by the Faculty Development Group in the penultimate year of the contract. The typical contract sequence is 3 years, 3 years, 5 years, and then repeating 8 years contracts. While contracts are renewed at these set intervals, the Academic Dean explained that these contracts are not renegotiated as contract responsibilities and the salary scale are non-negotiable. The Associate Dean emphasized that this teaching focus was reaffirmed over the last several years when some newer faculty requested reduced teaching loads in order to pursue research. This request was not granted and those faculty moved on to other institutions. Part-time faculty work under a pro-rated work load of either 2/3 or 1/2 time and perform all the same functions as full-time faculty, but at a proportionally reduced rate.

All available evidence, based on in-person interviews on campus and narratives found in work load reports, indicate a generally collegial and highly motivated faculty who are dedicated to the overall mission and ethos of the College. While the faculty contracts specify a minimum workload, it is readily apparent that most, if not all, faculty, inclusive of full-time, part-time, and lecturers, contribute well above the minimum required. The approach of the faculty is nothing short of extremely and wholly dedicated. Discussions with the deans and individual faculty indicate that these work load expectations may seem high, but they are the cultural norm and expectation at the College, not because of extrinsic forces, but due to genuine intrinsic passion for their disciplines and the mission of the College. While there is some apparent inequity in work load among faculty, the Academic Dean and Associate Deans appear thoughtful and intentional in trying to moderate the extremes of faculty workload. At least one faculty member confirmed this approach of the deans. Outside of course assignments, there are no upper or lower quantitative guidelines or requirements that guide faculty assignments and faculty are relatively autonomous in defining their non-course work loads. Because the faculty are highly dedicated and most readily accept additional responsibilities, the faculty as a whole is sufficient to deliver the institutional mission and the academic program.

All faculty are reviewed the year before their contract expires. In 2013-2014, the process of faculty review was examined and ultimately modified. The changes improved transparency and consistency and generated more constructive discussion and feedback for the faculty under review. The Faculty Development Group (a subset of the Personnel Committee) coordinates the reviews by assigning a FDG member to chair the review committee, as well as two faculty members and one student. The faculty member provides his or her own self-evaluation as evidence for use in the review. Community members, specifically faculty, outside the review committee are invited to submit input to a series of standard questions as well. The faculty review process appears thorough, fair and appropriate. Faculty also have required one-on-one check-ins with the Academic Deans. Faculty departures, contract buy-outs, and non-renewals are rare at the College with only six departures in the prior four years, and one contract that was not renewed. Adjunct faculty are also reviewed by the Academic Dean.

The primary purpose of the reviews and annual checks-ins with deans is to confirm that faculty are effective in carrying out the educational mission of the College. Reviews by deans, peers and students are used to confirm faculty effectiveness. NSSE results indicate that students score the faculty teaching effectiveness similarly to comparison groups. The College uses several other indirect measures of faculty effectiveness. These indirect measures include the quality of student

performance on capstone type work such as internships, senior projects, post-graduate job and graduate school enrollments, and student evaluations of courses.

The self-study and the academic deans identified faculty salaries as a significant concern, specifically, with relatively low salaries among the faculty who have been at the institution the longest. In the institutional MAP, the College identified raising faculty salaries as a goal and has acted systematically to increase faculty salaries over the prior ten years. The Academic Dean plans to study the faculty salary issue in spring 2018, and the MAP goal aims to benchmark the College's salaries above EcoLeague peers and below elite liberal arts colleges. While faculty salaries are perceived as low by the deans, this was not a vocal issue of concern for current faculty, as indicated during interviews during two faculty open sessions. However, both faculty and deans identified the faculty salary issue as a potential negative influence in recruiting new faculty. Further, because the College maintains a formulaic faculty salary scale, in order to offer incoming faculty higher salaries the deans indicated that current faculty salaries must rise in a commensurate fashion. There are currently no detailed quantitative information, benchmarking or goals for faculty salaries.

A review of the vita of full-time faculty and their three-year workloads from 2013-2016 indicated that full-time faculty have advanced or terminal degrees in their fields and largely maintain very active involvement in the campus community and their disciplines. The team reviewed the vita of two lecturers and did not review the CVs of any adjunct faculty. However, College policy requires an M.S. and/or five years of relevant professional experience for adjunct faculty.

Faculty and deans recognize the need for professional development and participation in scholarship, research and creative activities. Contract faculty are allotted a one-term sabbatical after every nine terms of full-time teaching. The current system of funding for professional development, however, is unequal, and depends on whether a faculty member is in an endowed position. The College identified a three-year goal of having $3000 per year per faculty member for professional development. The upcoming capital campaign will be a source of these funds. Currently, faculty not in an endowed position may request funds from the dean. The faculty CVs show that there is no shortage of impressive uses for these funds, including conference attendance, professional travel and training and creative works. Faculty indicated that more funds and consistent funding would be useful.

The College is purposeful when making new hires, and these decisions are guided by an academic priorities plan, with concomitant attention to diversity considerations. Hiring follows standard procedures in higher education for a national search (i.e., formation of a search committee, advertisement with relevant affirmative action language, interview process, campus visits, campus input, recommendation to the president). The proportion of female faculty has risen since the last NEASC review, reaching 54%/46% male/female in the most recent year. Driven by a number of factors, including the large percentage of international students, the desire to recruit more domestic minority students, and the desire to have a faculty more representative of national patterns, the College has set a goal of doubling the number of faculty from domestic underrepresented minorities by 2022. The remote, rural setting, comparatively low faculty salaries, and current lack of diversity at the College and in Bar Harbor all present challenges to

meeting this goal, yet the Academic Dean is thinking creatively about how to address these challenges.

Teaching and Learning: A review of syllabi, the Course Catalog, interviews with faculty and NSSE data confirm that the methods of instruction are varied and are well-matched to the purpose and mission of the College while also meeting generally accepted academic and professional standards and expectations. The curriculum incorporates activities which generally bolster student learning. For example, a 2017 review of 318 courses, administered by the Academic Dean, demonstrated that courses engage students with each other through group work (78% of courses), with faculty (85% of courses require at least one individual faculty meeting), with the community (51% of courses), and in professional contexts (internships and senior projects completed by 100% of graduates) that apply and stretch students' academic learning. This same survey overwhelmingly confirmed that coursework is designed to address the College's six learning objectives. The active and hands-on focus of the curriculum is both a selling point for the College as well as an effective pedagogical approach to the human ecology major.

The College prides itself on its pedagogical approaches that emphasize the hands-on, problem-focused, real-world context and interdisciplinary nature of its curriculum. It uses the natural, cultural and social surrounding as expanded learning environments. Faculty use the impressive surroundings of Acadia National Park, the two college farms, the Atlantic Ocean, as well as the surrounding communities as their learning laboratories. Other distant learning locations are accessed through the extensive and expanding expeditionary courses. While the Human Ecology major learning objectives are incorporated into coursework, there is no formal assessment mechanism or system of documentation to determine the level to which the six learning objectives are met within a course or across the major.

As will be discussed more in Standard 8, the self-study, E-series forms and discussions with the Academic Dean and faculty indicate that the main method of assessment of learning objectives is through informal means such as student and faculty narratives, employment rates, graduate school attendance rates, and internship and senior project evaluations. These informal and often qualitative metrics all point to a positive outcome for graduates and bode well for the College's academic program. For example, the data indicate that that 60% of alumni are in graduate school within five years and 97% are employed within one year, but information about the survey process and sample sizes was limited.

Academic freedom and integrity among faculty and students is expected and formalized in written policies.

Teaching and experimental pedagogy is emphasized in faculty reviews and encouraged as part of the campus ethos. While every faculty member is provided a mentor and receives support and regular reviews from the academic deans, there are few formal on-campus training and development opportunities. The training that does occur is often informal and ad hoc, largely comprised of observing peers or receiving feedback from the dean, peers, or students. The lack of structure for professional development in teaching and learning may become more important as the College makes faculty replacements over the next few years. New faculty might

particularly benefit from formal workshops or other on-campus pedagogical learning opportunities.

Class sizes are small, with a mean of 11-13 over the prior four years, and the College has maintained its target student to faculty ratio of 10:1 over the last several years. Students typically take courses from a range of faculty, with a minimum of at least six different faculty because general education resource area courses must each be taken from a different faculty member.

Student academic advising occurs formally through an assigned academic advisor. Advisors are typically faculty, including full-time, part-time and lecturers. There are also several academic staff, including the head librarian, coordinator of academic advising, the academic deans and even the Dean of Student Affairs who also advise students. The College uses an indirect assessment method, NSSE data, to track its progress on advising effectiveness. One output that suggests there is quality academic advising is the six-year graduate rate, currently at 71% with a 75% goal. Further, the reported 60% rate for graduate school admissions also indicate quality advising and education. As a small and close-knit community, informal advising abounds and students often consult with numerous faculty for academic and professional advice. There are multiple advising check-points and this, coupled with the hands-on approach of faculty and other support staff, effectively ensures that all students are engaged in making appropriate academic and professional plans.

Although the College is primarily a teaching institution, collectively the faculty and students take research seriously. Faculty demonstrate creativity and dedication to research by integrating it into coursework, facilitating senior projects and pursuing it during time outside of the classroom. According to NSSE survey results (2016 survey), 53% of the students had conducted research with a faculty member, and senior projects are often a means for students to engage in research. Among graduate students, all must complete research projects and all make professional presentations prior to graduation. A review of full-time faculty CVs and 3-year workload reports show a faculty that is very engaged in meaningful scholarly work both on and off campus.

7. Institutional Resources

Human Resources: The College employs qualified staff and faculty and its desirability as an employer is evidenced by extremely low employee turnover rates. High employee satisfaction is also evidenced by the results of a recent employee survey conducted by the Personnel Committee. Employee headcount has remained very stable in recent years. For fiscal year 2014, the College reported that it had 78 full-time employees with 92 total employees. For fiscal year 2017, the College reported 79 full-time employees with 91 total employees.

The College does not have a stand-alone human resource department nor a single individual that is wholly dedicated to this function. Instead, the College uses a variety of tools to perform the traditional HR functions. Search committees are used for all positions, although the committee may be as small as three in some cases. An employee in the business office handles employee benefits matters. One of the many College committees, the Personnel Committee, plays a vital role in organizing new employee orientation and providing mentors for new employees. Employee disciplinary matters are handled by managers in consultation with the Administrative

Dean. Employee evaluations are performed on an annual basis. The College publishes its human resources policies via the faculty and staff handbooks.

Although budgets are tight, there is some limited funding ($5,000 per year) to support professional development for staff. The College has been increasing faculty salaries by $3,000 each year for a number of years to bring faculty compensation more in line with that at peer institutions and to better attract and retain faculty members. Staff have generally received raises of 3% per year. The impact of these efforts has been to make the College more competitive in compensation for both faculty and staff.

Financial Resources: The financial results of the College in recent years show a consistent pattern of sizable operating losses. In FY 2014, the change in net assets from operations was ($1.535) million and this amount has risen since then to ($2.252) million in FY 2017. The College's leadership team and board members view the College as operating at breakeven on a cash basis; however, even with the exclusion of depreciation expense, the cash operating loss in FY 2017 was approximately $1 million. To date, the College has not taken additional distributions from its endowment to fund these deficits.

An important cause of the FY 2017 operating loss is a decline in net tuition revenue. Based on the audited financial statements, net tuition income fell from $4.905 million in the FY 2016 to $4.306 in FY 2017, a decrease of $599 thousand or 12.2%. The decline was not completely offset by increases in other revenues, as total revenues declined from $12.813 million to $12.595 million. The current year (FY 2018) projection in the self-study shows little expected improvement in net tuition revenue.

The operating losses leave the College with limited resources with which to respond to unforeseen events, such as an unexpected enrollment decline or an unexpected rise in a major cost such as medical insurance. Based on interviews with the Administrative Dean, the College has attempted to do multi-year financial planning but found that, due to the number of significant variables impacting the actual results, the exercise was of limited value.

The need to grow operating revenues is widely recognized by the administration and the Board. The College has a goal of increasing enrollment to 350 students, up from approximately 330 currently. At the same time, the College hopes to reduce the discount rate, despite the long-standing national and College trend of ever-increasing discount rates. Strategies to achieve these goals do not provide certainty of reversing these difficult trends. For example, the College is working on raising its profile through earned media and other visibility-increasing activities. Despite recent successes with this, the actual impact on applications and discount rate remains to be seen and may take some time to have an effect.

The College is actively pursuing a strategy of increasing its student housing capacity, which has the potential to both directly and indirectly increase the revenues of the institution. The College's financial results show that housing fees are low in relation to total tuition revenue as the College currently only houses about half of its student body on campus. The College is currently in negotiations to purchase property that would add proximately 70 more beds to the current

housing capacity. The property under consideration might also generate additional revenue to the College in the summer through rental activity to outsiders during the peak tourist season.

Indirectly, the availability of more housing may make the College more attractive to prospective students. While all first-year students live on-campus, the lack of sufficient housing for other students can be perceived as a negative by prospective students and their families. There are some challenges in finding off-campus housing for the entire academic year in Bar Harbor, thus housing a greater share of the student body on campus may actually create more interest in the College.

The College is launching a new capital campaign with an ambitious $50 million goal, which, if successful, will strengthen the College's financial position. The Compass Group was engaged to assess fundraising capacity and assist with the development of the campaign goal. Based on the firm's analysis, the Board approved the campaign and total goal at its October 2017 meeting. The College will hire an additional person to support the conduct of the campaign.

The campaign goals articulated by the preliminary case statement include:

- $19.5 million for a new academic building.
- $6.0 million to support the conversion to 100% renewable energy and becoming the world's first fossil fuel free campus.
- $3.0 million for new student residences.
- $8.5 million for student scholarships.
- $9.0 million for endowed faculty positions.

Trustees are actively engaged in key financial issues and decisions. The management of the discount rate and the impact that retention has on the College's financial condition have been discussed by the Board a number of times. Members of the Board expressed strong enthusiasm for the potential additional student housing and the upcoming capital campaign.

The Board, through its Investment Committee, actively oversees the management of the College's endowment ($48 million at June 30. 2016). The Chair of the Investment Committee noted that Cambridge Associates, a firm well-known in the world of college endowment management, was engaged two years ago to assist the Investment Committee. At that time, the investment policy statement was reviewed and revised and, despite excellent investment return results from the existing two equity fund managers, the committee decided that it was prudent to expand the number of fund managers being used to approximately 15 to obtain more appropriate diversification of its investments.

The College's financial statements are audited by the Maine-based firm Nicholson, Michaud & Company. The Audit Committee is a standing committee of the Board of Trustees and receives the management letter comments. Senior leadership was responsive to recent management letter comments that related to a lack of a separation of certain duties in the business office.

Information, Physical and Technological Resources: The College has a beautiful campus comprised of buildings situated along the Maine waterfront. The views and connection to nature provide an inspiring setting for study and learning.

Based on a tour of campus buildings, the College's buildings are attractive, well-maintained and show that much care has been given in recent years to their condition. For example, a $2.7 million renovation of Turrets, a key building on campus, was completed in 2013. There does not appear to be major deferred maintenance issues at the current time. Discussions with the administrative dean and the director of campus planning confirmed that deferred maintenance issues have been substantially reduced over the last ten years.

In addition to the core campus, there are other properties owned by the College that enhance student learning and the overall student experience. There are two working farms that have been donated to the College that provide opportunities for students to learn first-hand about agriculture. The presence of these farms has led to a cluster of classes that are offered on food systems and production. Beech Hill Farm focuses on the production of organic vegetables. The Peggy Rockefeller Farm is dedicated to livestock production, including cattle, sheep and fowl. The single largest customer for each farm is the College's dining hall. Students are actively engaged in work at each farm. Taken together, the farms are largely operating at break-even so that these properties are not a material drain on the financial resources of the institution.

In addition to the farms, the College has ownership interest in two islands off the coast of Maine. The College is evaluating how to make the best use of the islands to enhance the student experience. Students expressed great enthusiasm for these properties being a part of the learning environment of the College.

Improvements to the physical plant are an important component of the upcoming capital campaign. The single largest component of the campaign is raising $19.5 million to build a new academic building and to enhance other classroom spaces on campus. According to the director of campus planning, campus concept planning is currently underway to inform the campus decisions on facilities that will be made over the next few years.

The Thorndike Library occupies the second floor of Kaelber Hall in the center of campus and is staffed with three professional librarians, including one archivist. The library's collection and its electronic journals and databases provide sufficient support to support the academic mission of the College. The library's operating budget, including its budget for collection development, has been stable in recent years. In an effort to improve the service to the College community, the library has recently shifted more of its budget from print journals to online databases. The library also seeks to acquire all books needed for classes for its collection during the course of each academic year and the existing budget for collection development has been sufficient for this purpose. The reading room is spacious and airy, with windows on two sides, and is heavily used by students. The other supporting spaces in the library are adequate for the needs of the institution. The library has recently added a new archives section.

The library is open over 100 hours per week during the term with extended hours near the end of each academic term. Online resources are available to the College community on a 24/7 basis. Currently, the library reports to the Administrative Dean.

The Department of Information Technology is located in the center of campus and is staffed by four full-time professionals assisted by a number of work study students. The Help Desk, which is largely staffed by students who have been trained for this work, provides prompt service to members of the College community needing assistance. A four-year refresh policy is used for computers on campus and this department also maintains a graphics computer lab in the Arts and Sciences Building.

Technological resources have been adequate up until the current time; however, the College is at a point where increasing data and technology needs may require further investment. For example, PowerFAIDS is being implemented to better manage and automate the financial aid processes and this may require more technology support and resources. The current wireless system is seven years old and may soon need replacement. Other software solutions, including the student record database (Three Rivers System's CAMS), are also at the end of their product life and will need replacement in the next few years. Simultaneously, the College is considering the construction and renovation of a significant amount of space dedicated to learning, for which it makes sense to revisit the standard it uses for technology to be used in classrooms. Further, a formal evaluation of the College's current condition of its data security is needed in light of the ever-increasing numbers of data breaches in all organizations.

8. Educational Effectiveness

As discussed in detail above in Standard Four, the College communicates a clear set of student learning outcomes – creativity, critical thinking, community engagement, communication, integrative thinking, and interdisciplinarity – that connect directly to the mission of the institution. Interviews with faculty, students and academic administrators indicate that these outcomes are enthusiastically endorsed by the entire community.

The self-study highlighted – and interviews with faculty and administrators confirmed – a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods used to assess student learning. Undergraduate student achievement is evidenced through a variety of indicators: retention and graduation data, alumni surveys, student exit interviews, accumulated narrative assessments from each instructor for each course, a culminating senior project, writing portfolios, NSSE student surveys, and documentation of student awards and publications.

While there are examples of the College collecting data on student learning and using this data to improve the institution, the College still needs to develop systematic protocols for gathering, analyzing, and employing this data to enhance its mission. Interviews with faculty and administrators confirm that the college community has yet to fully-embrace learning assessment as a valuable activity.

Quantitative Information on Student Achievement: With an 84% retention rate, College data indicates that it performs above the National Student Clearing House Research Center's mean of

75.5% for first-to-second year retention. The College's six-year graduation rate of 70% in 2010 compares favorably to the National Center for Education Statistics average of 66% for private four-year institutions. College data show stability or incremental positive trends, year-over-year, in each of these areas.

The self-study notes that the "UWC [United World College] cohort at COA consistently outperforms all other cohorts for both retention and graduation." The College attributes this to "higher college preparedness, more financial aid, and stronger restrictions on taking time off from school." While the College wishes to "transfer what it has learned from this group to the general student population" in order to improve overall retention and graduation rates, it wasn't clear to the review team what the plans are to accomplish this goal. The administration is considering new, less permissive, student leave policies; a direction adopted as a result of this analysis.

Alumni surveys and LinkedIn data gathered by the Institutional Advancement Office report that within one year of graduation 26% of alumni start graduate school. 60% of COA's alumni attend graduate school within five years of graduation, according to data reported on the "Beyond COA" page on the website. The "About COA" webpage reports, "Overall, 55% of graduates go on to advanced study at the Masters or Doctoral level." According to the self-study, "Within one year of graduation, 54% of students work at a job related to their field of study." Surveys of alumni suggest high levels of student learning in critical thinking and creative problem solving. While the College was unable to share the sample size or methodology of this survey, the results are consistent with NSSE data for enrolled seniors.

NSSE responses indicate that seniors attribute gains in their knowledge and skills to their education. 91% of COA seniors responded "very much" or "quite a bit" to the question "how much has your experience at COA contributed to your ability to think critically and analytically?" 84% report that COA helped them "very much" or "quite a bit" to learn how to solve complex real-world problems. Similarly, students perceive substantial gains during their time at the College in the areas of "working effectively with others," "writing clearly and effectively," "developing or clarifying a personal code of values and ethics," and "speaking clearly and effectively."

The only area where a significant minority of seniors respond positively is in "analyzing numerical and statistical information," where only 39% of COA seniors responded "very much" or "quite a bit." The College has analyzed its NSSE results in order to assess its educational effectiveness, and has used the results to plan for a new faculty position in computer science in an effort to bolster the quantitative reasoning area. In response, it has also increased course offerings requiring quantitative reasoning and incorporated quantitative reasoning in writing assignments.

NSSE data shows that compared with other New England private institutions, more of the College's students participate in high-impact educational practices, including learning communities, service learning, research with faculty, internships, study abroad, and culminating senior experiences. 98% of seniors report participating in two or more of these high-impact practices compared with only 78% at other New England private colleges.

Qualitative Information on Student Achievement: A review of syllabi and student narrative evaluations suggest that assessment of student learning at the course level is currently inconsistent. While it is clear that individual course syllabi are consonant with the overall institutional mission, in spring 2017 only 11 out of 54 syllabi reviewed contained specific measurable student learning outcomes, and none of the examples of student reflective self-evaluations or faculty narrative evaluations provided to the review team referenced specific learning outcomes or expected competencies. Interviews with faculty and staff indicated that at present there are no systems in place to review syllabi for appropriate learning outcomes.

As noted in Standard 2, COA faculty were surveyed in 2017 to determine, "which of the educational objectives they intentionally tried to foster within their courses." The 318 total responses collected by the College indicate that over 90% of courses intentionally foster critical thinking, communication, and integrative thinking. Close to 80% of courses are designed to promote creativity and interdisciplinarity, while 50% of courses intentionally address community engagement. Additional information reported from the 2017 faculty survey provides the College with a snapshot of what students are doing in their courses: writing, group work, oral presentations, artistic work, and work with the community. At the time of the visit, COA staff indicated that additional analysis of these results would be conducted to determine how student learning might be enhanced.

The senior year project, as currently defined, does not necessarily represent a culmination of four years of work in one area of student interest. Students can use the senior project to explore new methodologies, creative practices, or topic areas related or tangential to their primary area of focus. Consequently, student projects are not useful indicators of the most advanced level of student learning. The self-study identifies the goal of improving the overall consistency of the senior projects. An important future initiative of the College will be to find protocols that will support higher levels of competency for senior student projects. To that end, the Academic Affairs Committee is working with faculty to "review and assess criteria for successful senior projects," with a target date of 2019.

The College does not systematically track awards and other accomplishments of its graduates, though several staff members indicated that this would be desirable data to collect. The 47 instances of student awards reported in the self-study – two Fulbright awards, six Udall scholarships, 12 Watson fellowships, four Goldwater scholarships, to name a few – represent significant student achievement, pointing to the quality of the educational program. This type of outcome information represents a rich source of data to drive curricular and co-curricular enhancements, and the College is encouraged to continue to seek ways to use it for that purpose.

According to a Student Life analysis completed in May 2016, while Student Life sees co-curricular activities as an institutional priority, there appears to be limited support from the academic side of the institution. Goal five of the College's MAP addresses ongoing efforts to integrate curricular and co-curricular activities, with co-curricular activities identified as an important place for developing student leadership capacity. At the time of the visit, the College seemed to be focusing on its outdoor program and work-study programs as the two best opportunities to link co-curricular activities with students' curricular work, and co-curricular

learning objectives have recently been developed for each program within Student Life. Examples provided demonstrate thoughtful, comprehensive, and measurable learning outcomes appropriate to the co-curricular activity. A stated future goal for the Student Life Office is to develop effective plans to assess these learning objectives.

The College's use of exit interviews and its commitment to student writing portfolios stand as examples of thoughtful assessment that resulted in institutional change. The College conducts exit interviews with students who withdraw prior to graduation. In an effort to increase student retention, information collected from these exit interviews resulted in increased counseling services, emergency student loans, and other forms of academic support. A comprehensive and methodical assessment process resulted in the new writing for the future initiative. As outlined in the strategic plan, this new initiative will make significant positive changes to the curriculum.

Given the College's small size, and the high-touch nature of advising and instruction, the institution relies on informal faculty and administrative networks to gather qualitative data about student learning. Much of this information is observational and is shared in small informal gatherings. As noted above, the College would benefit from more systematic qualitative data gathering as well as greater reliance on quantitative data for programmatic decision-making and resource allocation. Conversations with college administrators, faculty, and the self-study report itself all indicated that a significant amount of data gathered by the College regarding student learning is "anecdotal," thereby making it difficult for the College leadership to generalize about what students have gained from the academic and student life experience at the College.

<u>The Graduate Program</u>: The College Catalog does not currently identify specific learning outcomes for students pursuing the M.Phil. degree beyond the college-wide learning outcomes. College publications and interviews with faculty and administrators confirmed that there are no graduate-level courses beyond the "periodically scheduled" graduate seminar, that no data is systematically collected on employment or further education obtained by M.Phil. graduates, and that the College undertakes no institutional assessment of graduate student theses. While there was a comprehensive internal review of the graduate program in 2009, it was unclear which, if any, of the resulting recommendations were adopted.

9. Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure

Integrity: As evident in the people, policies, and practices of the institution, the College endeavors to exemplify the values articulated in its mission and philosophy of human ecology. The College promotes this ideal among all of its employees, students, and trustees. Faculty regularly review the relevancy of human ecology to ensure that the commitment is authentic and widespread among the various constituency groups. The student handbook, academic and community policies manual, and the administration and support staff manual provide accessible resources for these groups. Rights and responsibilities of each constituency group are clearly stated. A high level of ethical behavior is expected and emphasized for all groups, from the students to the trustees, and, as such, statements of integrity reside in each manual.

In 2016, the faculty agreed to include a statement of academic integrity in all syllabi. The College monitors the syllabi to ensure the statement is included.

Grievance policies and procedures for faculty, staff, and students are clearly articulated in their respective handbooks. If grievances between employees cannot be resolved, the College brings in an outside facilitator to mediate.

The College has maintained the tradition of the All Campus Meeting (ACM) that has been in existence since the inception of the College. The ACM is designed as a town hall meeting that includes representation of faculty, students, and staff. The standing committees of the ACM are governed by individual charters. Although many issues are discussed using this model, the College is careful to safeguard the privacy of individuals protected by FERPA and employee rights.

The College emphasizes a commitment to communal integrity and urges its members to "emphasize a campus culture based on the deepest respect for each other and address violence in all its forms (MAP goal 28)."

Transparency: The College's website, which was significantly redesigned in 2015, provides current and pertinent information primarily for prospective students. Learning outcomes are highlighted and easy to access. As the main information conduit to the general public, it is easy to access information about the College and its mission. All elements required by the public disclosure section of standard nine are included in the website. The Course Catalog provides specific information about policies, procedures, academic programs, privacy policies, grievances, appeals, etc. and is updated annually by the director of academic services and the registrar.

The College outlines the financial aid program in detail in the Financial Planning Options publication and in general terms in the Catalog. Prospective students are able to calculate the likely cost of earning a degree at COA using the net price calculator. The NEASC self-study is on the website and the College encouraged the community to read it and solicited feedback. In addition, a press release about the site team's visit went out to the local newspaper and an email was sent to alumni and trustees.

The website serves as the primary resource for prospective students and the College relies heavily on the site as a marketing tool. The website is easy to navigate and all the admission information is available with very few clicks. Along with a focus on traditional undergraduates, the admission landing page provides special instructions for international students, home-schooled students, non-traditional students, and transfers.

Public Disclosure: All of the College's written materials and information on the website are reviewed by several people to ensure accuracy. The web team is a formal committee of staff and faculty who meet regularly and oversee the website, update content, fix any issues, and manage content. The entire campus community is invited to contact members of the web team if they have issues with the site or notice any inaccuracies.

The faculty pages are up to date and the course descriptions are clear. The website describes the size of the student body, expectations of students to demonstrate academic honesty, and

adherence to the mission of the College. The retention and graduation rates are readily accessible via the website, as are post-graduation success stories. The financial audit is also on the website.

COA's publications are available on the website https://www.coa.edu. The website is comprehensive and is the primary vehicle used to inform the public. It is easy to use on large and small screens. The application process and financial aid information are easily accessible to prospective students.

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Affirmation of Compliance

To document the college's compliance with Federal regulations relating to Title IV, the team reviewed College of the Atlantic's Affirmation of Compliance form signed by the CEO. As noted in this report, College of the Atlantic (COA) publicly discloses on its website and other relevant publications its policy on transfer of credit along with a list of institutions with which it has articulation agreements. Public notification of the evaluation visit and of the opportunity for public comment was made on April 11, 2017, through a press release and was advertised in the local Bar Harbor newspaper. A notification was also placed on the COA website and an email was sent to alumni and trustees. Policies on student rights and responsibilities, including grievance procedures, are clearly stated, well publicized and readily available, and fairly and consistently administered. COA does not offer distance or correspondence education, thus there are no issues related to verifying students' identities for these types of programs. As discussed in Standard 4: *The Academic Program*, the team's review of course schedules and syllabi for a cross section of COA's course offerings, including proposals for internships, independent studies and senior projects, found the assignment of credit reflective of the College's policy and consistent with the Commission's standards.

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Summary

College of the Atlantic used the self-study process, including the Data First and E-series forms, effectively to review several key aspects of the College's operation. The reviews and analyses conducted as part of the self-study led to measurable improvements, particularly in areas identified as needing special attention by prior evaluations. The self-study process also identified areas where improvements are needed, such as the need for more systematic decision processes in several areas that are driven by data and analysis.

In general, it is the view of the Evaluation Team that the College is focused on the quality, integrity and effectiveness of its degree programs and the success of its students. Its mission is clearly articulated and drives almost all of the activities of the College. The mission is being carried out by a highly committed and involved Board of Trustees, a strong and respected president and senior leadership team, and a well-qualified faculty and staff committed to serving the needs of the College's students.

The Board of Trustees and current senior leadership of the College have increased their focus on planning and assessment. The MAP of Strategic Priorities, adopted by the All College Meeting

in May 2015 and affirmed by the Board in August 2015, provides a comprehensive set of goals for the College to focus on as it approaches its 50th anniversary. Progress has already been made on several of these goals, most notably on increasing overall enrollment, and faculty and staff are positive about the direction and focus that the MAP provides.

College of the Atlantic's unique mission drives the activities of the College, both inside and outside of the classroom, and provides it with a niche and reputation that is one its strongest assets. The College has made progress in several areas in recent years, however the trustees and administration are well aware of the financial pressures faced by the College and by small private colleges in general. With this in mind, the team offers the following summary of the most important strengths and concerns.

Strengths

- The College's faculty and staff are highly committed to the unique mission of the College and strongly believe in the importance of what the College is doing, now and into the future. Even in times of tight resources, the commitment to providing an outstanding student experience is evident in all areas of the College, creating a vibrant and energetic campus community. Processes are in place to engage students in decision-making processes and there is a sense that all members of the community are "in this together."

- The College has a clearly articulated mission focused on human ecology that provides it with a strong differentiator from other liberal arts colleges. Significant work has been done in recent years to help prospective students and other newcomers understand that mission (e.g., the new website) and to more fully integrate the mission into the fabric of the institution (e.g., the human ecology core course).

- The College has enjoyed strong philanthropic support for a college its size, which has led to the recent decision to undertake an ambitious $50 million campaign to celebrate the College's upcoming 50th anniversary. This support is critical to COA given its tight resources and offers the opportunity for improvement in many of the areas of concern caused by funding constraints. From the trustees on down, there is agreement that the campaign goals are achievable and that the initiative will transform the College's future.

- Significant progress has been made in addressing the need for comprehensive institutional planning, most notably with the development and endorsement of the College's recent organizational plan, "the MAP." The broad input that led to the creation of the plan has led to strong awareness on campus and with trustees about the direction of the College and the resources that will be needed to reach the College's goals.

- The collaborative governance processes, including such structures as the All College Meeting, are strongly linked to the mission of the College and result in broad participation from all parts of the campus community. These structures strengthen the community connection to the mission and provide many opportunities for input on challenges and opportunities for the College. Faculty, staff and students feel like they have a say in the direction of the College.

- The physical location of the campus and its beauty are significant assets for the College and clearly factor into its mission and future direction. The farms owned and operated by the College connect to its mission and provide invaluable and irreplaceable opportunities for students to live that mission through experiential learning that would be hard to replicate elsewhere.

Concerns

- While the College has had some success in increasing its enrollment, the operating results remain challenged primarily because of the increasing discount rate. The College remains tuition-driven and other revenue-generating opportunities have not grown enough to have a significant positive impact on the bottom line. Strong philanthropic support has provided the resources needed to meet current needs, but a concerted effort must be made to achieve stronger operating results. The College's current discount rate is already quite high and has been on an upward trend. A discount rate this high leaves the College with few degrees of freedom to reach its net tuition revenue goals and will make it difficult to deal with unforeseen circumstances such as a downturn in enrollment.

- Improving retention and growing the applicant pool are important goals that will help improve the College's operating results, and there is the recognition that strong actions must be taken to make progress on these goals. Providing additional on-campus housing has been identified as a major step that will make the College more attractive to both prospective and current students. While plans are underway to provide more housing, rapid progress must be made to help with retention and recruiting. The College must continue to seek other ways beyond providing more housing to help it achieve its desired overall enrollment levels.

- The College has articulated a clear set of learning outcomes that connect directly to the mission of the institution. However, the evaluation of these learning outcomes relies primarily on informal discussion and networks to assess student learning. Regular and formal assessment of student learning outcomes is not being done for many of the various requirements or courses. While faculty believe that learning outcomes are being achieved, there is little systematic evaluation or analyses to support this conclusion. Student learning would benefit from a more systematic and formal approach to understanding how and what students are learning.

- The College has made significant progress in addressing prior concerns raised about the lack of a formal and comprehensive institutional planning process. However, the evaluation team noted several planning and evaluation efforts that could be enhanced by having a more systematic and integrated approach to collecting and analyzing data. The use of more relevant external data, collected in a way that is linked to institutional priorities, could provide useful benchmarks to gauge institutional effectiveness. Since several areas of campus are working on the same goals, agreement across areas on relevant data and prioritizing what will be measured and how it will be measured are critical to evaluating the progress of the College on its mission and goals.