MUSKEGON COMMUNITY COLLEGE
SELF-STUDY REPORT 2010

PRESENTED TO THE
Higher Learning Commission of the
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
for the October 2010 Comprehensive Visit

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INTRODUCTION

Fall 2010 marks the beginning of Muskegon Community College’s 85th year of serving the people of West Michigan. The self-study process has encouraged campus-wide reflection and discussion about our past accomplishments, as well as about our present strengths and challenges. The report that follows is based on a synthesis of views arising from many individual and group conversations, as well as on evidence from a great variety of sources.

The purpose of this self-study is to demonstrate that Muskegon Community College meets the five accreditation criteria of the Higher Learning Commission and qualifies for continued accreditation. It also seeks to identify ways in which Muskegon Community College can continue to improve and meet the changing needs of its students and community. We welcome the opportunity to share the results of this self-study with our campus, external constituencies, and the Higher Learning Commission.

◆ A History of Muskegon Community College

The College was established as Muskegon Junior College by the Muskegon Board of Education in 1926 and was housed on the third floor of what was then Muskegon Senior High School. Only four other two-year institutions existed in Michigan at the time. In 1929, the College was one of four successful junior colleges applying to the North Central Association and has been continuously accredited since that time.

By 1934, enrollment of both the College and the high school had grown beyond the capacity of a single building, so the Junior College moved into the former Hackley School in downtown Muskegon. At the time of its move into this facility and for seventeen years afterward, Muskegon Junior College was primarily geared to those students intending to complete at least four years of college. Muskegon’s reputation in this field of the college transfer program was an enviable one, and continues to be so today.

In June 1951, after an enabling act by the Michigan Legislature, the name and educational scope of the College changed. The College’s programs were broadened to serve a larger number of students with a wider variety of interests. Courses were added in technical fields that enabled young men and women to prepare themselves for a specific field of employment in two years of training beyond high school. There was no shrinking of the transfer program, only an expanded curriculum to serve a larger segment of the community. The name change from Muskegon Junior College to Muskegon Community College reflected the expanded nature of the College’s programs.

By the early 1960s, enrollment had topped 2,000 and the College was operating full-time at area school buildings and part-time at eight other locations. The time had come for another step in the development of the College.

The Board of Education formed a special citizens committee to study the issue and make recommendations. The committee proposed that the College be separated from the public school system, that a county-wide community college district be created, that a board of trustees be elected to plan, build, and operate the school, and that millage be voted in sufficient amount and for enough years to build and operate the College.
Introduction

In April 1963, the county overwhelmingly approved the recommendations of the committee and elected the first Board of Trustees. The elected board went to work immediately and by September of that year had purchased the 111-acre campus on which the College exists today.

Alden B. Dow and Associates was named architect and by the summer of 1965 drawings were completed and construction begun. The vocational-technical wing was completed and occupied in fall 1966 and the following September the entire complex was placed in service. Formal dedication ceremonies were held October 22, 1967.

The first addition to the new campus was the Frauenthal Foundation Fine Arts Center, completed in 1968 and named for the Muskegon industrialist whose gift had made the Center possible, A. Harold Frauenthal.

When the new district was created, the name of the College was changed to Muskegon County Community College; but in spring 1969, at the request of the Board of Trustees, the State Board of Education approved changing the name once again to Muskegon Community College.

January 1995 opened a new era of educational opportunity with the completion of the Stevenson Center for Higher Education on the campus. The 90,000-square-foot facility represents about one-third the size of the main building and was constructed to complement existing architecture. The Center houses upper-level courses and programs offered by Ferris State, Grand Valley State, and Western Michigan universities. These institutions, along with Muskegon Community College, have formed a consortium to coordinate offerings to meet the needs of West Michigan residents.

Newly opened in January 2006, the Hendrik Meijer Library/Information Technology Center offers students and the community the latest in communication capabilities, including wireless Internet access, state-of-the-art library facilities/technologies and classrooms, and an Internet café.

Throughout its history, which includes name changes, physical location changes and expansions, the College has never lost its focus to meet the community’s educational needs. The College has maintained its regional accreditation since 1929. The last comprehensive visit was in fall 2000, which resulted in a ten-year accreditation, provided that the College submit an assessment progress report to the Higher Learning Commission by March 2004. This report satisfied the Commission, which extended the College’s accreditation to 2010.

♦ Muskegon Community College Today

Geographic Areas Served

Muskegon Community College is located in Muskegon County, Michigan, in the western part of the state. The population of Muskegon County is approximately 174,000. Its residents are considered “in-district” for tuition purposes, but the service area also includes Oceana and Newaygo Counties to the north, and Ottawa County to the south.
Introduction

The table below shows some characteristics of the population of the College’s service area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics (2006-2008 estimates)</th>
<th>City of Muskegon</th>
<th>Muskegon County</th>
<th>Newaygo County</th>
<th>Oceana County</th>
<th>Ottawa County</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% white non Hispanic</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>81.3</td>
<td>93.1</td>
<td>89.6</td>
<td>89.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% black non Hispanic</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Hispanic</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% below the poverty level</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% high school graduates (age 25 and older)</td>
<td>79.4</td>
<td>87.3</td>
<td>84.3</td>
<td>83.5</td>
<td>90.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% with bachelor’s degree (age 25 and older)</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey

The service area is not homogeneous. One county, Oceana, has a relatively high Hispanic population compared to the other counties. It also has the highest poverty level in the area. Ottawa County enjoys the lowest poverty level and the highest level of education. In fact, Ottawa County’s rate of bachelor’s degree attainment is almost three times that of the City of Muskegon.

A complete portrait of the area must also include the rich variety of geographical features (the many lakes and rivers, and especially the Lake Michigan beaches that attract thousands of visitors every year) and economic sectors (from “mega” farms to high-technology companies). Muskegon Community College is a vital part of the educational fabric of the region, and it also has a large impact on the local economy.

◆ Academic Programs

The College offers 39 certificates and 41 associate’s degrees. The Associate in Science and Arts degrees are designed for students intending to transfer to four-year colleges or universities. Students graduating from Muskegon Community College with ASA degrees are generally admitted to bachelor degree-granting institutions with junior year standing.

Associate in Applied Science degree programs are designed for students who desire to enter the workforce immediately after graduation. The degree may be used as a transfer degree to a limited number of baccalaureate programs, but it is not specifically designed to transfer to four-year colleges or universities.

Students earning a general Associate in Science and Arts degree comprise approximately 40% of all graduates, and approximately 30% graduate with an associate’s degree or certificate in a health-related program.

The College also offers a wide variety of non-credit, continuing education classes, workshops, seminars, and special events to meet the lifelong learning needs of the community. These non-credit educational offerings emphasize career development, personal growth, and cultural enrichment.
Enrollment and Student Characteristics

Fall enrollment has increased 15% from 2006 to 2009, with the largest increase in just the past year. Early registration numbers for fall 2010 cause us to anticipate another steep jump this year.

So far, we have only anecdotal evidence to explain the increased enrollment. Enrollment staff have reported a greater number of new students who are of “traditional” college age (63% of our students are age 24 or under) and attribute this to the lower cost of attendance at Muskegon Community College. In fact, the cost of attendance at the College is 20% to 30% that of nearby four-year universities. But the average age of our students is slowly creeping up in recent years, from 26 to 27, which may reflect the influx we have seen in displaced workers coming to us to train for new jobs.

- Approximately 58% of our students attend part-time (i.e., take fewer than 12 credits), 42% are full-time; 56% are female and 44% are male.
- Student race/ethnicity is as follows: White 79%; Black 10%; Hispanic 4%; American Indian 2%; Asian 1%; and the remainder unknown.

Partly because of our transfer mission, many students do not graduate from Muskegon Community College. In fact, our transfer-out rate is 37% (that is, the percentage of first-time, full-time students who transferred out within 150% of “normal time” to complete their program). We are, however, concerned with our low 14% overall graduation rate. In 2010, Muskegon Community College is a new member of the Achieving the Dream initiative, which we hope will help us identify and address our problem areas related to graduation and other student success measures.

Summary of Strengths and Responses to Concerns Identified during the 2000 Visit

Strengths

During the 2000 comprehensive evaluation, the visiting team’s report highlighted eight institutional strengths. Examples of evidence provided throughout this self-study will demonstrate how these strengths and more are still evident at Muskegon Community College today:

- a stable funding base and fiscal reserve;
- a well-developed and useful employee handbook;
- a Personal Achievement Laboratory (now College Success Center) that helps students prepare for college studies;
- a well-maintained physical plant that is conducive to teaching and learning;
- a friendly and open management style and high morale campus-wide;
- a common goal among faculty and staff to provide the best education possible for the students;
• a community services program (now distributed among several departments) that provides exemplary service to the community; and
• a center for higher education that is an asset to MCC students and to the greater Muskegon area

Responses to Concerns
Six significant areas of concern were identified by the visiting team, and we will address each concern below.

1. General Education and Basic Core Competencies

The College has not agreed on an overriding set of general education or basic core competencies that should be acquired by every educated person in the course of his or her education and that are taught by faculty holding graduate degrees with substantial graduate study in the discipline being taught.

General Education. Muskegon Community College offers two distinct associate’s degrees—the Associate in Science and Arts (ASA) and the Associate in Applied Science (AAS). The ASA is intended to prepare students for transfer to a four-year college or university, and the AAS is designed for students preparing for immediate employment upon graduation.

In the 1990s the College conducted an extensive review of the general education requirements for each degree and created a detailed purpose statement for each. The general abilities for students pursuing an AAS degree include things that are appropriate and important for occupational programs; for example, communication and problem-solving skills, the ability to adapt to changing technology, and skill in relating to people of various backgrounds. These abilities are also to be found within the purposes of the ASA degree. There are certain abilities, however, that the College sees as appropriate for students intending to transfer, but not necessarily for occupational students; for example, the major ideas and values of the visual and performing arts, and the history of major ideas and values in great works of Western world literature. The College maintains that the differences between the two purpose statements are appropriate for guiding students toward their educational and professional goals.

Faculty Credentials. Article VII of the master agreement between the MCC faculty and Board of Trustees specifies that “selection of a new faculty member in an academic field shall be based, where possible, on the minimum of a master’s degree with specialization in the major portion of the area of his/her assignment.”

A list of full-time faculty in 2010 who teach in liberal arts disciplines reveals that these faculty members have master’s degrees related to the subject taught. In fact, with only a few exceptions in the industrial/manufacturing area, all full-time faculty members have master’s degrees.

2. Assessing Student Learning

Although progress has been made in bringing the college community to an overall understanding of the importance and function of the assessment of student academic achievement in maintaining the academic health of the institution, work remains to be done in assessing student learning.
Introduction

The last visiting team recommended that MCC submit a report by March 2004 on the College’s progress in assessing student academic achievement. The College submitted the report, and the Commission had no further recommendations.

3. Faculty Evaluations

The team noted some instances in which full-time faculty have not been evaluated according to the timelines contained in the negotiated agreement. Although the previous NCA evaluation team raised this issue, the present team did note MCC had made progress in this area.

According to their contracts, full-time faculty are to be evaluated twice (fall and winter semesters) during their first year of teaching, once (fall or winter semester) during their second year, and every three years thereafter. Evaluation teams include the faculty member’s department chair, another faculty member from the department, a faculty member from the specific discipline, a faculty member chosen by the person being evaluated, and the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The members of the evaluation team observe the person being evaluated during a class session, rating on such things as lecture style, classroom management effectiveness, and interaction with students.

The College has been diligent in the scheduled evaluations of new faculty; unfortunately, the regular evaluation of more seasoned faculty members continues to be problematic. Since the evaluation process is so heavily dependent on faculty members serving on the teams, and since our faculty spend most of their time in the classroom, it has sometimes been difficult to meet the evaluation schedule. The College recognizes that this remains an area for improvement. The College’s new president, upon his arrival in summer 2009, insisted that all evaluations be brought up to date, and since that has been accomplished, we foresee that the mandated schedule will be maintained.

4. Strategic Plan

Although a rather thorough analysis using a SWOT methodology supports the planning process which lists goals and objectives for most of the College’s departments, lacking is a formal strategic plan (beyond planning for facilities and technology as found in the Campus Master Plan) which includes budgetary implications, staff responsibilities, and timelines for completion.

The College developed a four-year strategic plan shortly after the 2000 reaccreditation visit and has maintained a focus on strategic planning since then. The College has written strategic plans for 2002-2006 and 2006-2011, and is currently undergoing a new strategic planning process that involves teaching and non-teaching staff, a Board member, and members of the community. Criterion 2 provides ample evidence that Muskegon Community College has addressed the concerns raised in the 2000 site visit report regarding the lack of a formal strategic plan.

5. Institutional Research

The College’s efforts to collect data for planning, assessment of student academic achievement, and assessment of institutional effectiveness among other things are impeded by the lack of a centralized institutional research function.

The College created a new Office of Institutional Research and Development (IRD) and hired its first director (and assigned a full-time administrative assistant to the director) in 2006. These two staff members are responsible for seeking and securing grant funding for the college, as well as producing enrollment reports for state and federal entities, conducting program evaluations of occupational programs, and responding to various research requests from faculty and administration.
Much of the IRD office’s work involves producing mandated reports for federal and state entities. In fact, in the first two years of the IRD office’s existence, the staff focused on learning to query the new Datatel student information system to get accurate data for the reports. In the past two years, the capacity of the IRD office to do other types of research has greatly improved. Examples of research conducted by the IRD office include:

- Designing, administering, and analyzing surveys of former students
- Using federal and state databases to create comparisons with other colleges (e.g., staffing, graduation rates, square feet of facility per student, tuition and fees)
- Conducting research about the college and community to include in grant proposals (e.g., unemployment levels, poverty rates)
- Surveying faculty, advisory group members, and students in occupational programs to support program evaluations
- Producing high school market penetration reports
- Producing activity reports (i.e., number of appointments by month) for the counseling department
- Creating enrollment and grade histories for individual courses or entire departments to support departmental discipline reviews
- Analyzing and reporting results of the Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress (MAPP) standardized assessment

With MCC’s entry into the Achieving the Dream initiative, we anticipate that the IRD office will be focusing its efforts on gathering data related to student persistence and success.

6. Part-Time Faculty Credentials

The issue of part-time faculty teaching courses in disciplines in which they do not have substantial graduate study is a problem.

Muskegon Community College’s policy is that part-time faculty members have a bachelor’s degree plus at least eighteen graduate-level credits in the discipline they will teach. Many adjunct faculty members exceed those requirements; a list of adjunct faculty shows that 53 out of 140 (38%) have graduate degrees related to the disciplines they teach at the College. In some instances, particularly in occupational areas, practical experience is at least as highly valued as academic credentials, and the College has made exceptions to the policy in order to retain these highly experienced instructors.

◆ The Current Self-Study Process

Preparation for the 2010 comprehensive visit began in spring 2008, when President David Rule appointed two co-chairs for the self-study process: Bob Ferrentino, Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Richard Doctor, English instructor and assessment coordinator. The co-chairs, the President, and the President’s staff met off-campus for a day to discuss the timeline for the self-study and, most important, to identify campus leaders who might lead self-study committees.
At that meeting, a steering committee representative of the College’s organizational structure was appointed to lead and coordinate the entire self-study process. Members of the steering committee included:

Janie Brooks, Vice President of Student Services
Richard Doctor (co-chair), English instructor
Bob Ferrentino (co-chair), Vice President for Academic Affairs
Jenny Klingenberg, Instructor and Chair, English/Communications
Darren Mattone, Instructor, Life Science
Anne Meilof, Director of Institutional Research and Development
Diana Osborn, Executive Vice President of Administrative Services
Teresa Sturrus, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs

At its first meeting in May 2008, the steering committee compiled a list of people to invite to be committee chairs, and everyone who was invited accepted the challenge. The original plan was for each committee to be responsible for a chapter, which may include one or two core components from the HLC Criteria for Accreditation.

Calls went out for volunteers to serve on the committees—at Faculty Seminar Days, via email to the entire campus community, and at meetings of individual employee groups. Over 80 people eventually participated in compiling evidence and writing chapters. The committees met throughout the 2008-2009 academic year, engaging in lively discussion of ways in which Muskegon Community College met the criteria, gathering information that might be used to document such claims, and identifying areas where the College might be falling short.

The steering committee also met regularly, to exchange updates on the progress of the self-study document and to develop ways in which the process could be communicated to the campus community. The self-study co-chairs made a presentation to the College’s Board of Trustees, which included a charge to the Board to keep informed about the process and to consider reviewing the College’s Mission Statement.

The committee chairs submitted drafts of their chapters in spring 2009, and throughout fall 2009 and spring 2010, the co-chairs revised the drafts, often asking for clarification or more information from the chapter authors. In April and May 2010, the steering committee as well as several volunteers from all over campus read and commented on all of the sections related to Criteria 1 through 5, and their comments were incorporated into the final document.

It is important to note that several significant changes occurred on campus during the self-study process. President David Rule left the college in summer 2008. For the next several months, Diana Osborn served as interim president, until Dr. Dale Nesbary took over the presidency of the College in June 2009. Also in summer 2009, vice president and self-study co-chair Bob Ferrentino left the College. Teresa Sturrus was appointed as vice president, and Anne Meilof took Mr. Ferrentino’s place as self-study co-chair. Despite these changes in personnel, the process continued according to schedule.

As the chapters were compiled into one document, it became clear that the original structure, arranged around topics and sometimes combining components out of order, was not going to tell our story in a clear way. We have therefore changed the document’s structure to simply present evidence for the core components in order. We are confident that the visiting team will find the evidence presented in this self-study document to be an accurate representation of what they find on campus this fall, and that the document and the visit will justify continued accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission.
CRITERION ONE  Mission and Integrity

Muskegon Community College operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes that involve the Board, administration, faculty, staff, and students.
CRITERION ONE ◆ Mission and Integrity

Introduction to Criterion One

In this section, we will describe the mission documents of Muskegon Community College and evaluate how well those mission documents are understood by campus constituencies and how well the mission is carried out throughout the College. We will also examine the effectiveness of governance and administrative structures, the extent to which diversity is promoted, and the ways in which the College maintains its integrity. The linkages between the mission and the College’s governance, planning, teaching and learning activities will lay the groundwork for the remaining four criteria.

Core Component 1a: The organization’s mission documents are clear and articulate publicly the organization’s commitments.

Summary of Core Component 1a
Muskegon Community College’s mission documents include the Mission Statement and the nine commitment statements that further define the mission; a Vision Statement; several long-range plans; and statements related to the purposes of general education. All mission documents support the Mission Statement and are created and revised by representatives from all areas of campus. The mission documents are distributed widely, and the campus community takes seriously its responsibility to further the mission and plans of the College. In many ways, our policies and processes demonstrate our mission focus and show that we meet the expectations of Core Component 1a.

◆ The Mission Statement

Muskegon Community College’s primary Mission Statement underwent a major revision in 1999, with input from the Board of Trustees, College faculty and staff. The broad mission has remained unchanged since then:

“Muskegon Community College, an associate degree-granting institution of higher education, is a center for lifelong learning which provides persons the opportunity to attain their educational goals by offering programs that respond to individual, community and global needs.”

This statement is followed by nine ways in which MCC aims to fulfill that mission:

1. Prepare students for successful transfer to four-year colleges and universities, and enable students to pursue higher-level degree opportunities through our local partnerships with university programs.

2. Prepare students in critical thinking, communication and long-term learning skills for the changing challenges of the future.

3. Develop technical and vocational skills necessary to enter and/or advance in the technologically sophisticated workplace of the 21st century.

4. Provide for the assessment and/or improvement of learning skills and attitudes necessary for a successful educational experience.
5. Meet the unique educational, cultural, and societal needs in the community through special courses, seminars, and exhibits.

6. Respond in a rapid fashion to the ever-changing educational and training needs of local and regional business and industry.

7. Stimulate intellectual curiosity, promote humanitarian values and enhance the general educational experiences necessary for persons to function as effective citizens.

8. Create an atmosphere where diversity is acknowledged and encouraged.

9. Provide comprehensive student services that are conducive to student learning and satisfaction in all facets of the college experience and appropriate to an open door community college.

Those items have also remained unchanged since 1999, with the exception of the second item (“Prepare students in critical thinking…”), which the Board of Trustees adopted in 2009. This mission stability reflects the unchanging commitments of the College to its public.

The Mission Statement is included in the College catalog and the student handbook, both published annually. Laminated copies have been distributed to all employees on campus. It is also prominently displayed on the College Web site and is included in other mission documents. This Mission Statement is sometimes accompanied by a Vision Statement: “Building our community’s gateway to opportunities…Creating the first and best choice for success.”

◆ Other Mission Documents

Other guiding documents can be considered mission documents, as they stem from and support the main Mission Statement. These documents include the strategic plans of 2002-2006 and 2006-2011, an academic master plan, an enrollment management plan, an information technology strategic plan, and a campus master plan for facilities.

Two strategic plans (2002-2006 and 2006-2011) have been developed since our last reaccreditation visit, which testifies to the desire of the College to remain current in responding to the needs of all of our constituencies. In both cases, representatives from all groups on campus, as well as members of the broader community, were involved in the creation of the plans. Both strategic plans speak to the desire to serve students of all ages and backgrounds, providing them with a high-quality academic experience; foster relationships with K-12 and four-year university partners; and provide employees with the resources they need to perform their jobs well. The more recent plan lists guiding principles and values such as academic freedom, shared governance, and integrity. It is reviewed by the Executive Vice President of Administration, and updates have been presented to faculty, the Board of Trustees, and the Coordinating Council. Unfortunately, since the plan lacks metrics and deadlines, and many of the goals are ongoing, it is very difficult to accurately measure our progress toward completion.

The Academic Master Plan 2007-2011 (AMP) was finalized in 2006 and is constantly reviewed and updated. This document is the result of many months of examination of individual discipline areas, program performance indicators, regional and national employment data, and concerns relating to the College’s service area. The focus is on desired outcomes for our students and improving learning opportunities. Some of the principles of the AMP are that it should advance the College’s strategic plan by supporting and contributing to the achievement of its goals, improve
student performance by fostering a culture of excellence in learning as our primary focus, and emphasize program and student assessment.

Another important mission document is the Enrollment Management Plan 2008-2011, which was developed in 2007 by a large group representing all College units, and which is overseen by the Student Services division and the Student Affairs Council. The group began its work by agreeing on a mission, vision, and guiding principles. The Enrollment Management Plan complements the first priority of the Strategic Plan 2006-2011: to develop and implement institutional long-range planning. It addresses some of the recommendations of the Academic Master Plan related to expanding dual-enrollment opportunities, and it supports the Mission Statement’s goal to “provide comprehensive student services that are conducive to student learning.” A progress report was developed in fall 2009.

The Information Technology Strategic Plan 2007-2010 includes a vision for the Office of Information Technology that centers on leading technical innovation at the College. As with the other plans, the IT plan uses the College’s broader strategic plan as its point of departure. The main goals of the IT plan are to provide technical support that meets the educational and administrative needs of the College.

The 2000 Campus Master Plan was approved by the Board of Trustees in December 1999 and is subtitled “Student Centered Learning for the New Millennium.” The goals and priorities of this plan were mission driven, as they not only spoke to the physical aspects and functionality of the institution but also to improving student learning. The Hendrik Meijer Library/Information Technology Center was one of the cornerstones, providing resources for academic programs and making electronic resources available to students for research. Another pillar of the process was the Student One-Stop Center, which provides counseling, orientation, student life/clubs, and financial aid services in a much more convenient way. Most of the goals and priorities of the 2000 master plan were accomplished, and the Board and campus are embarking on a new campus master planning process in 2010.
**Plans Support the Mission Statement**

The following chart gives examples of how the various plans support the Mission Statement; in particular, the statement related to student learning. Although the terminology may vary from goal to value to principle, it is apparent that every College plan addresses the importance of assessing and improving student learning:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>MCC Mission Statement Item:</strong></th>
<th>“Provide for the assessment and improvement of learning skills and attitudes necessary for a successful educational experience”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Strategic Plan 2002 - 2006** | **Goal:** Quality Instruction  
We will continue to support and improve quality instruction  
**Strategies:**  
• Research and identify curricular changes and instructional improvement, remedial focus, and development of new curricular offerings  
• Evaluate and assess student achievement and instructional success |
| **Strategic Plan 2006 - 2011** | **Value:** The Pursuit of Knowledge  
A place where all staff and students share goals and work together to strengthen teaching and learning  
**Guiding Principle:** The College assures quality, continuous improvement and relevancy through continuous assessment of all programs and services |
| **Academic Master Plan 2007 – 2011** | **Principle:** Improve student performance by fostering a culture of excellence in learning as our primary focus  
**Principle:** Emphasize program and student assessment |
| **Enrollment Management Plan 2008 – 2011** | **Guiding Principle:** Student success and satisfaction with the quality of student life will promote enrollment persistence and growth  
**Goal:** To assess student goal attainment |
| **Information Technology Strategic Plan 2007- 2010** | **Guiding Principle:** IT facilitates the College’s efforts to achieve established learning outcomes  
**Guiding Principle:** OIT assures quality, continuous improvement, and relevancy through continuous assessment of all IT systems and services |
| **Campus Master Plan 2000 - 2010** | **Guideline/Philosophical Intent:** MCC facilities, programs and services must be “student-centered,” creating the optimum environment for students to learn and grow  
**Guideline/Philosophical Intent:** Facilities must be flexible, support teamwork, and provide a variety of learning environments toward the enhancement of lifelong learning |

**General Education Documents**

Muskegon Community College has established two sets of purposes of general education—one for the Associate in Science and Arts degree, and one for the Associate in Applied Science degree. These purpose statements are mission documents, and both include an introductory paragraph describing the value of general education. They each describe skills and areas of knowledge the College expects students to be able to do and to know. However, the general education requirements are by no means identical, and the differences are discussed in Core Component
4b. The general education program undergoes review by the general education coordinator and the Instructional Affairs Council, but the purpose statements have remained remarkably stable. The only change in the Associate in Science and Arts degree purposes in recent years has been to update a computer literacy requirement to support information literacy. In addition, new transfer courses are regularly created and each is placed under one of the areas of knowledge. The purposes haven’t changed, but students have more choices to complete requirements.

◆ Revisions to Documents

As a part of the HLC self-study process, the co-chairs asked the Board of Trustees to review the Mission Statement and the MCC Board of Trustees Policy Manual to be sure that everything harmonized with the mission of the College. Other influences caused the Board to pause and review the Mission Statement. For example, before conducting a search for a new president, the Board wanted to ensure that the Mission Statement accurately reflected the College. This review by the Board resulted in the addition of the student learning goal related to critical thinking.

Through a self-evaluation process, the Board has determined that it will review its entire policy manual every two years. In addition, the Board revises the policy manual as issues arise; for example, a recent addition deals with a new smoking ban on campus, and a nepotism policy was inserted within the past year.

Strategic plans also undergo frequent updates. The current plan is in effect through 2011, but with the arrival of a new president in 2009, the campus is already working on a new plan to build upon it. The Academic Master Plan is updated yearly by department chairs and others, and the Enrollment Management Plan is reviewed quarterly and updated every three years by the Vice President of Student Services and staff.

**Strengths Related to Core Component 1a**

- All plans stem from and are guided by the Mission Statement
- The Mission Statement is easily understood yet sufficiently detailed to provide direction
- The Board of Trustees takes seriously its charge to oversee the Mission Statement
- The Mission Statement is published widely
- The College has been diligent in its planning processes and in following through on those plans

**Challenges Related to Core Component 1a**

- The Mission Statement is presented inconsistently (i.e., it does not always include the Vision Statement)
- A plethora of visions, guiding principles, and core values from plan to plan perhaps dilute the core mission
- The Mission Statement includes a long list of items that make it difficult for people to remember and internalize
- The many planning documents often lack measurable goals and deadlines
Core Component 1b: In its mission documents, the organization recognizes the diversity of its learners, other constituencies, and the greater society it serves.

Summary of Core Component 1b
The Mission Statement lists nine purposes that the College is committed to in order to fulfill its mission. One of the nine is “Create an atmosphere where diversity is acknowledged and encouraged.” This is one of several places where we indicate this as an important part of our mission. Our attitudes and actions toward employees reflect the College’s commitment to creating this atmosphere. We seek a diverse student body, and our curriculum is designed to include recognition of the importance of living in a world where differences between people are understood and valued. Our many co-curricular activities offer opportunities to further develop our students’ awareness and their values. Challenges we must face include achievement gaps between socioeconomic and racial groups, and ensuring that a commitment to diversity goes beyond mere acknowledgment. In various ways we are committed to creating an atmosphere of diversity at Muskegon Community College and thus meet the expectations of Core Component 1b.

◆ Diversity Mission Statements and Employment

In addition to the prominent statement about diversity in our official mission, other policies and written statements reflect the priority given by the College to this commitment. A few years ago, the Board of Trustees specifically inserted the word “diversity” into the Non-Discrimination, Equal Opportunity and Diversity policy (Article 1.03 in the Board’s policy manual). All job postings at the College contain the following statement: “Muskegon Community College continues to promote staff diversity. Minorities and women are encouraged to apply. Anyone with a disability will be reasonably accommodated by the College. If you have a disability and need accommodation or assistance in applying for this position, please contact Human Resources.”

The College consistently displays in its hiring practices the commitment to create an atmosphere of diversity. We are more diverse at all levels of our workforce than at any time in our history, including the executive level of administration. The College is led for the first time by an African-American president. In addition, for the first time all three vice presidents are women and one is African-American.

Over the past three years, the College has experienced some success in attracting diverse candidates for other posted positions. We have made particular strides in diversity in the Counseling staff, which now includes three minority women, two African-American and one Hispanic.

◆ Diversity in Our Student Body

A weakness in our public statements about diversity is that none are purposely meant for students. At best we might say our brochures and other marketing materials are designed to appear multicultural.

The College’s recruitment efforts to attract all kinds of students to enroll and succeed, however, reflect our commitment to diversity. At the very least, the College aims to have a student population that reflects the community we serve. According to the latest American Community Survey from the U.S. Census Bureau, approximately 79% of Muskegon County residents are
White, and 13% are Black/Non-Hispanic (with the remainder primarily Hispanic or Multi-Racial). Although the race and ethnicity questions on the application for admission are optional, almost all students self-identify their race and ethnicity. From winter semester 2008 to winter semester 2009, students identifying as White decreased from 84% to 80%, and students identifying as Black/Non-Hispanic increased from 10% to 12%, which better reflects the complexion of the community we serve.

Older students comprise a group that isn’t usually considered when thinking about diversity; however, the College has had a tremendous influx of nontraditional (over age 24) students entering the College in the past two years, creating a diversity of age and experience. Because of the State of Michigan’s No Worker Left Behind and other initiatives, people who haven’t been in a college classroom for decades, if ever, are coming to be trained for new jobs. In fact, the average age of students has increased an entire year, from 26 to 27 years old, from fall 2008 to fall 2009. The College’s Student Life Office now plays a large part in meeting the needs of these students.

Recognizing the unique needs of each student, the College also has a Special Populations counselor who works with students with disabilities; students from economically disadvantaged families; nontraditional training and employment participants; single parents; displaced homemakers; and people with other barriers to educational achievement, including those with limited English proficiency.

◆ Achievement Gaps

Understanding of and appreciation for diversity are all well and good, but when there are discrepancies between achievement levels of different groups, there is a problem. Instructors and staff have observed the disturbing trends of disproportionately large numbers of minority students in developmental courses, and correspondingly few minority students in higher-level classes. Until recently, the College did not have the research capacity to study this issue seriously, much less develop strategies to address the problem. But with our recent admission to the group of Achieving the Dream colleges, a focus of our efforts toward increasing student success will be in closing achievement gaps.

◆ Outreach to Varied Groups

The College actively reaches out to groups in the community that are traditionally underserved in higher education. Each February, the Student Services division offers the Black Youth Conference, which draws 100 to 150 9th-grade students to campus from throughout our service area. The purpose of the conference is to expose African-American students to career programs at the College and to motivate them to continue education into the post-secondary level. A unique feature of this conference is that the high school students design and plan the elements of the conference, including the breakout sessions and speakers. Sessions include those on Black history, essay writing, a “reality store” where participants learn about real-world household budgeting, and professional interviews where student participants interview African-American professionals about their education and career.

The College has also hosted the Hispanic Youth Conference, where approximately 500 Hispanic middle and high school students have come to campus for a day of breakout sessions and special speakers, including Hispanic professionals/role models. Unfortunately, this program has not been offered the last two years.
In 2006, the College collaborated with the Muskegon Public Schools, which has primarily an African-American student body, to pursue and obtain the College’s first Upward Bound grant from the U.S. Department of Education. Now in its third year, the Upward Bound program has introduced many minority students to the college experience, and several participants have already transferred to postsecondary institutions.

◆ The Value of Diversity in Our Curriculum

If the College is able to recruit and retain a diverse student body, we want them to encounter, as they seek a degree or some other goal, a curriculum that is clearly committed to the value of diversity. If they pursue either one of our two associate’s degrees, they will see how the College holds this value.

For students pursuing the Associate in Science and Arts degree (ASA), they will find in the College’s statement of the Purposes of General Education six general abilities that the College defines as the most important goals of our degree requirements. One of these abilities provides evidence that we value diversity: “To understand the ethical and moral dimensions of your own values, your basic assumptions and limitations, and to respond reflectively and appropriately to the value systems of others.” The introductory paragraph of this purposes document also asserts that “an education should prepare you not only for a career, but also for life” and our general education program aims to help you “to understand both yourself and world you live in.” If these broad goals are met by students, we expect they will see more likely value diversity.

The ASA purposes document also very broadly defines nine areas of knowledge students should encounter in pursuing the degree (students must choose a course from each of the nine areas). One area is “the competing ideologies that influence the modern, international climate” and includes “major political and cultural differences among nations.” Another area named “American culture” includes “race relations; attitudes toward gender; equality versus freedom and opportunity.” A goal of Western world literature includes “the value and contribution of women and minority writers.” Our purposes for general education support the importance of diversity.

In addition to our written goal statements about diversity in the curriculum, some of the courses that count toward the ASA degree include foreign languages (German, French, and Spanish, and as of 2009, Chinese). Courses in Italian are offered through our continuing education program. The College also offers international business classes. Other courses directly related to the appreciation and understanding of diversity include Women’s Studies, African American History, Cultural Diversity in Contemporary Society, Comparative World Governments, International Relations, World History, Diverse Voices, and World Religions.

The faculty of the College recognizes the importance of diversity and what it brings to our institution. In a comprehensive survey of faculty conducted in January 2009, an overwhelming majority of respondents agreed that “a diverse work force enriches the College by offering many perspectives and promoting campus diversity.” In that same survey roughly half of the faculty said diversity issues are addressed in their classes: 54% indicated ethnicity issues are addressed; 56% addressed race; and 60% gender. Only 37% reported addressing sexual identity in their classes.

Students pursuing the Associate in Applied Science (AAS) occupational degree will also encounter a commitment to diversity. The College has identified five purposes for general education for this degree and number five is “Human Relations: the ability to live and work in changing settings with
people of differing backgrounds and effectively contribute as a leader and a follower.” Again, this goal does not use the word “diversity,” but it does describe the kind of open-minded person we would like to help develop.

**The Value of Diversity in Our Co-Curricular Offerings**

Outside of classroom experiences, the College supports a wide array of opportunities for students to learn about people and cultures that are different from themselves.

Muskegon Community College conducts an annual “Global Awareness Festival,” for which the College was awarded Excellence in Institutional Leadership by the 5th annual Michigan Liberal Arts Network for Development in 2004. This festival lasts an entire week and focuses on a different area of the world each year, most recently the Americas. In 2009, more than 850 students participated in the festival.

Another experience in global thinking is the Model United Nations, which has had high participation by Muskegon Community College scholars. In 2005, nine students traveled to Chicago to participate in a four-day simulation exercise representing and promoting the policies of the country of Somalia.

The College also works to create international co-curricular opportunities. For example, the Business department of the College has a connection with our sister school in Stuttgart, Germany, which faculty and students visit annually, and then host the German visitors here in West Michigan. Trips to Thailand have been organized by one of our faculty members, and attended by both faculty and students. The College sponsors presentations, usually two to three annually, given by faculty who have traveled. Egypt, Singapore, Iran, India and Russia are a few recent examples.

Muskegon Community College has membership in the Midwest Institute for International and Intercultural Education. Membership provides opportunities to travel and study abroad for both faculty and students. There are possible Fulbright scholarships for faculty, and programs for internationalizing the curriculum sessions in the summer take place in nearby Kalamazoo.

Every fall we have an international student panel where students share information about their home countries. The College also has an international newsletter, which describes the various international activities, opportunities and events on campus. The College demonstrates its commitment to internationalizing the campus by creating and funding the position of international coordinator, who orchestrates the many international activities.

Recognizing the diversity of our students, the College encourages students to participate in a variety of sanctioned clubs. Many are organized to address diversity issues, including the Black Student Alliance, Gay/Straight Alliance, Hispanic Student Organization, International Affairs Organization, International Club, Sociology Club, Geo Club, and Support of Adult Student’s Success (SASS). Full-time faculty advisors oversee each club.

The College has made available to faculty and staff the Institute for the Healing of Racism, designed to build a campus in which racism, prejudice, and hate are eliminated. Twelve percent of our faculty have attended this training, and the entire Student Services staff attended a two-day
session. Recently, the Board of Trustees approved a partnership with the Institute that will include collaborating to update the Institute’s curriculum.

Events such as the annual Unity Day breakfast sponsored by the Urban League, the Women of Distinction celebration, and Hispanic Heritage month are a few of the efforts made to recognize different groups and cultures and to celebrate their presence in our community.

We have in the past had a Diversity Committee comprising both faculty and staff and devoted to heightening the awareness of all employees regarding diversity issues. Despite not meeting formally in the last few years, the committee has been involved, informally, in events such as the Martin Luther King Day celebration and other diversity activities.

**Strengths Related to Core Component 1b**
- Our mission statements clearly show our support for diversity
- Our attitudes and actions toward employees reflect the College’s commitment to creating an atmosphere of diversity
- We seek a diverse student body
- Our curriculum recognizes the importance of living in a world where differences between people are understood and valued
- Our many co-curricular activities offer opportunities to further develop our students’ awareness of diversity

**Challenges Related to Core Component 1b**
- We must honestly look at incoming skills of minority and underprepared students and find approaches to help them succeed
- We should consider revitalizing the Diversity Committee
- We have little evidence of the impact on students of our curricular and co-curricular offerings with regard to diversity
Core Component 1c: Understanding of and support for the mission pervade the organization.

Summary of Core Component 1c
The previous two sections demonstrated that our mission is clear and, in its commitment to diversity, important. The College believes the Mission Statement is a worthy document and tries to disseminate it widely, but it is a challenge to know how many of our internal constituents support it, or even read and understand it. A significant number of faculty members and administrators are no doubt supportive of our Mission Statement, and the level of understanding and support for certain specific mission documents is very high. Whether students understand our mission is not certain. In addition, the College needs to be careful how it presents itself to avoid creating a misunderstanding about our mission. Finally, our mission statements keep us focused on our highest priorities. The support for and understanding of our mission demonstrate that we do reflect the standards of Core Component 1c.

☀ Exposure to and Support of the Mission

There are several ways faculty and staff, especially the decision-makers and planners, find themselves in situations where examining our mission documents is unavoidable, including during the self-study process. Every one of the approximately eighty-five volunteer self-study committee members encountered mission documents in their evaluation of the entire institution.

Anyone who has served (or is now serving) on a planning committee (strategic, academic, facilities, enrollment management, and information technology) has inevitably evaluated portions of our mission or its entirety. Participation in creating plans has been inclusive; the twenty-five members of the new strategic planning committee include faculty, administrators, clerical workers, custodians, professional staff, students, and community volunteers. The creation of the Academic Master Plan involved dozens of regular attendees, mostly faculty.

Members of our councils (Instructional Affairs, Business Administration, Student Services, Technology, and Coordinating) show support for the mission by taking action on issues that are related to our main Mission Statement and other mission documents. Take, for example, the way a new course is approved. The mission’s first commitment is “Prepare students for successful transfer to four-year colleges and universities, and enable students to pursue higher-level degree opportunities through our local partnerships with university programs.” To that end, the College urges transfer students to earn our Associate in Science and Arts degree. A major portion of the requirements to earn that degree are general education classes. The Purposes of General Education mission document describes what we want our students to know or do after completing our requirements. If a department wants to create a new course, a “New Course Proposal Form” must be completed that includes questions about how this course helps students to acquire any of the general abilities we have outlined in our purpose statement. The proposal must also state which of the nine areas of knowledge the course develops and where the proposed course falls in our requirements. A transferability study must also be completed.

Thus, if the course is adopted, members of the Instructional Affairs Council are supporting the mission commitment to “prepare students for successful transfer”; they are also supporting the Purposes of General Education mission document.
Some mission documents are well known by a large number of faculty. In the 2009 faculty survey, 80% of full-time instructors said they were aware that the six general abilities in our Purposes of General Education for the Associate in Science and Arts degree were the ultimate goals of the general education program and agreed that they made a deliberate attempt to teach them.

One item in the Mission Statement includes a commitment to assess student learning. The College goal of assessing student learning at five different levels (program, general education, discipline, course, and classroom) is widely disseminated and known by most of the faculty and staff; the five levels served as the major structure for our first academic master plan.

Finally, understanding and support for the mission is evident in the faculty response to our most recent change in the mission. When the Board of Trustees added a new mission statement item having to do with critical thinking, the Assessment Committee almost immediately looked at this new statement, connected it to the goals found in the Purposes of General Education, and proposed a new commitment to improve student learning by training faculty to better teach critical thinking skills.

**Challenges to Support of the Mission**

As described earlier, the College does a good job of distributing the Mission Statement, but it faces several challenges. First, this prominent display in all the important College documents is largely symbolic. We make the mission document available but it is difficult to know if it is read by employees and students, or that they understand and support it.

Second, the mission’s content is not completely consistent. The laminated copy sent to every employee includes a Vision Statement (“Building our community’s gateway to opportunities… Creating the first and best choice for success”), but the catalog, the Web site, and the student planner do not. The opening paragraph is missing from the version in the Academic Master Plan. It is hard to create support if what is being supported is stated differently in different places.

A further challenge to attaining College-wide support for the mission includes the action taken by the Board of Trustees in summer 2008. The self-study co-chairs had reminded the Board that their main roles in the self-study were to keep informed of the process and to examine the Mission Statement and their policy manual, as they have the stated responsibility and authority to do so. However, when the Board added a new item to the Mission Statement (“Prepare students in critical thinking, communication and long-term learning skills for the changing challenges of the future”), they surprised many by taking this action without consulting with any other group on campus.

Although the new statement has merit, the way it was created and adopted may have unwittingly alienated some groups. If the Board takes unilateral action, universal support is eroded; people want to be a part of decisions to feel ownership.

This Board action might be part of a larger communication problem. In the 2009 faculty survey, our faculty were asked to respond to this statement: “The Board of Trustees keeps faculty informed about important issues.” Out of seventy-seven responses, only fifteen agreed, and just one strongly agreed.

Finally, another challenge to promote understanding and support of the mission is that many areas or functions of the College have no mission statements. Academic departments, for example, do not have mission statements. We do not have Student Services or Continuing Education mission statements, and perhaps we should.
◆ Student Understanding of the Mission

Students are at least introduced to the mission when they open the catalog and the student handbook. Students have been represented on many of the committees on campus. Student involvement with these councils helps to increase their understanding of the goals of the College, but creating student support for the mission has never been a focus.

Student awareness of our mission statements grows indirectly, as they interact with College people and processes. In filling out an application, students learn that we offer both transfer and direct employment programs. When they take placement tests, they see that we assess student learning and offer help for those with weak skills. In sitting down with a counselor or a financial aid worker, students learn that our mission includes providing comprehensive student services.

Students also tell us indirectly that they support our mission when they finish classes and complete degrees. Survey results of those just graduating and former students now enrolled at other colleges are usually positive and reflect that the majority of our students value our requirements. In 2009 we sent a survey to 700 former students now enrolled at four-year schools; eighty-three students responded:

• 91% said their credits transferred fairly
• 44% said their grade point average was about the same as at MCC, and 23% said their grade point average was higher at their transfer college than at MCC (in essence, showing that MCC’s curriculum is as rigorous as the transfer schools’)
• Six out of ten said if they could start college over, they would begin at MCC

Another survey is given to students who are receiving the Associate in Science and Arts degree at the end of the winter term (our traditional graduation date), and it focuses on our general education requirements for that degree. About half of our winter 2009 ASA graduates participated. Here are some observations from their responses:

• Students felt they had made significant progress in developing their skills, for example, their ability to write research papers. When entering the College, 15% thought they had excellent research writing skills; when they were about to graduate, 61% said their skills were excellent, and the remaining 39% claimed their skills were good.
• When asked if they were well-prepared to go on to a four-year school, 49% agreed and 46% strongly agreed. Looking further ahead, 98% agreed or strongly agreed they had acquired a broad base of knowledge that would help them later in life.
• Our six general abilities of an educated person are the main goals of our general education requirements. A strong majority of students said they now know either a lot or quite a bit about each of the abilities: to acquire knowledge, 84%; to solve problems, 73%; to connect ideas, 83%; to understand ethics, 76%; to read critically, 76%, and to reason logically, 81%.

All of the above responses show indirect student support of our Purposes of General Education mission statement.

◆ Public Perception of the Mission

We have to be careful that the public doesn’t see our mission differently than we do internally. Specifically, the College’s only purpose when it was founded was to prepare students to transfer.
We have never lost sight of that purpose, and indeed, the majority of our students continue to be enrolled in the liberal arts/transfer program. In 2008-2009, the highest enrollment (1,363) was in the Associate in Science and Arts degree program, and the next highest was in all health-related programs (584). If we look at many of the most visible publications and promotions, however, the liberal arts transfer function seems to get little attention. Billboards advertise our EKG technician and truck driving certificates, but careers such as teaching or social work are never mentioned. The catalog devotes a dozen or so pages to the Associate in Science and Arts transfer degree, but many more pages explain in great detail our occupational programs. These emphases could contribute toward creating an inaccurate picture of what our mission really is, both occupational and transfer education.

Unfortunately, a comprehensive survey of community perceptions has not been done since the late 1990s. Realizing the importance of frequent environmental scanning, the College will conduct a community needs assessment in 2010 and plans to repeat it every two years.

**Mission Focuses the Campus**

As will become clear throughout this report, our mission both describes and guides everything we do, and we avoid taking on tasks that are outside our mission. For example, in 2008, a local charter school was losing its sponsor, and the school appealed to the College to take on the sponsorship. The Board, recognizing that it is not the College’s mission to operate elementary schools, rejected the request. There have also been requests from area school districts for the College to establish an early college or a middle college, but the administration has so far considered these efforts to also be outside our core mission.

Although not every person in the College community may be able to quote from our Mission Statement, if one watches what we do, it is apparent that we are committed to the ideals contained within the mission.

We do not survey students or employees and ask “How well do you know the mission of the College?” or “How well does the College live up to its mission?” Perhaps we should. But looking at the actions of faculty, administration and staff, one sees an awareness of and a commitment to the College’s main purposes.

**Strengths Related to Core Component 1c**

- Our Mission Statement is distributed widely to employees and students
- Many faculty and staff are well aware of the mission
- Faculty and staff are particularly supportive of related mission documents
- Our mission helps keep the College on track

**Challenges Related to Core Component 1c**

- We don’t know how many students and employees have actually read the mission
- All employee groups and students should be involved in any proposed changes
- The content of the mission needs to be consistent in various sources
- Few departments or programs have their own mission statements
- We need to take care not to distort the mission in promotional material
Core Component 1d: The organization’s governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the organization to fulfill its mission.

Summary of Core Component 1d

Muskegon Community College has a governing body, the Board of Trustees, that takes its oversight responsibilities seriously. The Board is kept informed by the College administration, which is organized into major and minor divisions that cooperate to do the work of the College. The administration is often advised by the various councils that are representative of all employee groups and campus departments. The College reviews its processes and makes changes where necessary for improvement. Through its collaborative processes and effective leadership structure, Muskegon Community College meets the expectations of Core Component 1d.

◆ Board of Trustees

Muskegon Community College is governed by a seven-member Board elected at-large by the citizens of Muskegon County. They have a wide range of work and life experience. The current chair of the Board is the recently retired CEO of a credit union, who provides financial and managerial expertise. Other Board members include a retired businessman and government employee with interest and knowledge regarding disability awareness; a medical doctor, now retired, with much strategic planning experience; an attorney, who provides insight into the fair and consistent application of policies; a former county commissioner and military service member with experience on Boards and governance; a bank executive who adds more knowledge about finance and investment; and a former educator and current township clerk.

The Trustees work hard to grow their governing abilities, as they consistently attend national conferences and belong to the Michigan Community College Association. Attendance at various conferences and meetings has provided training in effective board practices, including leadership in governance. Such participation enables the Board to better ascertain the needs of the community and to assess whether the institution is meeting its mission and goals. Realizing the need to assess their own effectiveness, in 2008 the Board undertook a comprehensive self-evaluation that revealed strengths, as well as areas for improvement.

The Board has two regularly appointed subcommittees, finance and personnel. These committees work with the administration in matters of budget, investments, tuition rates, grievances, and negotiations. Ad hoc committees are established from time to time for certain purposes such as the establishment and implementation of a new trustee orientation process, performance evaluation of the President, and master planning.

The Board of Trustees pride themselves in having the resolve necessary to preserve the institution’s integrity by doing the following:

- They have strived to maintain a low tuition rate for students in order that all may receive a quality education at an affordable price.
- They have infused technology at all levels of the institution in order to aid in student-centered learning.
- They have set aside money in our Repair, Replace, and Renovate fund so that we are ready to finance future projects.
Criterion One ◆ Mission and Integrity

- They have supported assessment of institutional effectiveness by planning at all levels.
- They have created a stable financial base for the institution and continue to find ways in which to carry that stable base forward.
- They have overseen negotiations of fair and equitable settlements with collective bargaining units on campus.
- They have kept a large fund balance in reserve to maintain current programs and introduce new programs.

◆ College Administrative Structure

The College’s **administrative structure** includes three major divisions—Academic Affairs, Administrative Services, and Student Services—each led by a Vice President. Three additional departments (Community Relations, Information Technology, and Institutional Research and Development) report directly to the President. The Academic Affairs division includes all academic departments as well as the Lakeshore Business and Industrial Training Center, the library, continuing education, the Center for Teaching and Learning, and the College Success Center. Administrative Services encompasses the physical plant, financial operations, human resources, as well as ancillary services such as the bookstore, food service, and golf course. Student Services oversees everything related to student recruitment, admission, financial aid, counseling and registration, as well as the athletics department. The Office of Information Technology was outsourced in 2005 to SunGard Higher Education. The institutional research and development office was created in 2006, and the community relations department is new as of fall 2009.

This structure helps ensure responsibility for all work of the College. At the same time, it does not support isolation. The division of responsibilities is flexible, and policies and procedures sometimes overlap. For example, Administrative Services consults with Student Services and Academic Affairs before making any changes to tuition payment processes.

The President’s cabinet includes the Executive Vice President of Administration, Vice President of Student Services, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Chief Information Officer, Director of Athletics, Director of Community Relations, and Director of Institutional Research and Development. Cabinet meetings are held every two weeks and are a vital way in which information is shared among divisions, with all corners of campus represented.

◆ The Council System of Governance

In 2006, the College governance system was reviewed by the College community. The council system was changed, including the elimination of the Institutional Planning, Assessment and Development Council. **Current councils** include Instructional Affairs, Student Services, Business Administration, and Information Technology, and they move their recommendations up and through the overarching Coordinating Council. These councils, in conjunction with the Faculty Association, Student Government, Maintenance/Custodial Association, MCC Educational Support Staff Unit, and Administrative/Professional Support staff, provide the structure for seeking opinions, expressing ideas, and developing recommendations. Following approval by the Coordinating Council, any policy recommendations are made to the President and then to the Board of Trustees. Membership on the councils includes representatives from all factions of the
College so that everyone’s voice is heard as decisions regarding the College are made. The College seriously tries to enlist all employee groups to participate in shared governance. This inclusiveness helps build positive relationships among all levels of employees.

♦ **Faculty Responsibility for Curriculum and Academic Processes**

The Instructional Affairs Council (IAC) is the main body overseeing academic integrity on campus. The council comprises one faculty representative from each department, discipline, or area; four students appointed by the Student Government Association; one representative from Continuing Education; the Vice President for Academic Affairs; and the Vice President of Student Services. Its responsibilities include oversight of instructional matters in their broadest sense, including degrees, programs, and courses; the use and acquisition of facilities and equipment relative to the instructional and educational objectives of the College; academic policies, procedures and practices; and recommendations pertaining to the *Academic Master Plan*.

The main business of the IAC is to review and approve or disapprove new courses and programs, or changes to courses and programs. It meets every other Wednesday during the academic year, with summer meetings scheduled as necessary.

♦ **Communication of Board and Council Actions**

Board of Trustees meetings occur once a month and are open to the public. The official meeting is held on the third Wednesday of the month at 12:30 pm, which might pose a problem for community members to attend. Board meetings are usually only attended by the President’s cabinet and perhaps another employee or two. The exception is when a topic of interest to the community is discussed (e.g., when the Board considered a request from the local school district to open a middle school on the College campus, and when a local charter school sought sponsorship from the College). *Minutes* of Board meetings are posted on the College Web site, and a condensed version of the Board action is distributed in an email to College employees and news media. The library retains copies of Board meeting minutes in the College Archive.

Minutes of council meetings are posted to an electronic folder available to all employees. Unfortunately, some councils are rather haphazard in their record-keeping and do not regularly post their minutes. Another difficulty is in the chain of communication from council to council. For example, a decision by the Instructional Affairs Council to approve a change to a course or an entirely new program may not make its way seamlessly to the Coordinating Council. And from there, it is still a challenge to make sure that the change is captured accurately everywhere (in the catalog, in the program inventory we maintain with the State, in the student application for admission, etc.).

♦ **Review of Processes**

Some of the recent reviews of processes have stemmed from major remodeling that has occurred. For example, the construction of the Student One-Stop area required the Student Services division to evaluate the job responsibilities of its employees, in order to restructure and improve many of the ways students are served. The division hired a consultant to conduct a formal analysis of their business processes; some of the recommendations have led to improvements in financial aid services. In 2006, the College engaged the services of the Noel-Levitz consulting group, which evaluated and made recommendations related to the College’s enrollment management practices. An outcome of that report was the creation of the College’s *Enrollment Management Plan.*

Another major change in recent years was the implementation of a new Enterprise Resource
Planning (ERP) system. With full support of the Board, in 2005, the College decided to move away from its homegrown and arcane computer records system and adopt the Datatel Colleague system. This project, dubbed Future Information Transformation (FIT), required a massive investment of resources, including time and money. Throughout 2005 and 2006, the FIT project involved teams from all over campus planning for the conversion of student records, financial aid information, human resources information, department budgets, and all other aspects of the business of the College from the former system to Colleague. The change was painful in many ways, as every field and every code had to be reviewed and approved, and everyone on campus had to learn a new record-keeping system. Not all elements of the system have been implemented, but plans are in place to add, for example, the degree audit component in 2010. Among other benefits, the implementation of Colleague has saved time by automating many processes and by making data more accurate and readily available for research.

Other improvements to processes have occurred on a smaller scale. For example, the Office of Community Relations was created in 2009. This office encompasses functions related to alumni relations, the College’s foundation, all marketing and advertising for the College, and the MCC-TV station. This office will be the entity primarily responsible for fundraising for the College, which in the past was owned by no one person or office. The charge to this new office is to ensure that the College is presented accurately and consistently, and that the College maintain strong relationships with alumni and donors. The College also realized that the haphazard way in which institutional reporting and research were being done was unacceptable. The Office of Information Technology previously did much of the enrollment reporting, and various offices did their own research. Now, with the Office of Institutional Research, all reporting and research is the responsibility of one office. Furthermore, that office is responsible for procuring grants for the College, another function that was owned by no one.

**Strengths Related to Core Component 1d**
- The council system ensures that decision-making is an inclusive process
- The College has a well-defined administrative structure
- Faculty bear the main responsibility for curriculum changes
- The College responds to needs by devoting appropriate resources

**Challenges Related to Core Component 1d**
- “Closing the loop” after decisions are made remains a challenge
- There is a lack of consistency in council meeting minutes
- Councils don’t communicate well with each other
Core Component 1e: The organization upholds and protects its integrity.

Summary of Core Component 1e

We are pleased that our self-study confirms that Muskegon Community College operates with a high level of integrity. Although organizational integrity is difficult to define, we believe it includes helpfulness, fairness, consistency, transparency, and most important, honesty. These virtues are evident in the College’s relationships to students, in its treatment of personnel, in its dealings with the community, in its fiscal practices, and in its relationship to our environment. All of these efforts together create an atmosphere of integrity on our campus. While there is certainly room for improvement, most evident in personnel issues, the College does strive to honestly and consistently do what it says it does and treat all constituents in an ethical manner, thus demonstrating that the College acts in accordance with the principles found in Core Component 1e.

◆ The College’s Ethical Relationships with Students

Students are treated honestly, fairly, and consistently. Recruiters sell the College, but do not sell a panacea that cannot be achieved. Employment prospects and transfer acceptability are honestly represented by the College. For example, the College receives funding every year for certain occupational programs under the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act. To remain in compliance with Perkins requirements, the College must report on “core indicators” including job placement information. We do not, however, publish our job placement rate in our marketing materials. Although at 92% it seems quite praiseworthy, the calculation is based only upon those students who respond to a survey. Thus, we may send 250 surveys to graduates, but if only 40 respond, and 37 of them are employed in their field of study, we are allowed to report a 92% success rate. Though publicizing these numbers is legal, we do not see it as ethical.

We also are scrupulously honest in describing the transfer of courses. For example, the College is a participant in the Michigan Association of College Registrars and Admissions Officers (MACRAO) agreement. The agreement says that if a student completes the general education requirements at Muskegon Community College, he or she will be regarded as having met the general education requirements of the transfer school. Counselors are careful to say that not all Michigan colleges and universities have signed the agreement, and almost every college that has signed has caveats. We do not claim to applicants that our courses are fully transferable, and then tell them something different after they enroll. Our students receive honest and consistent information.

Because Muskegon Community College is an open door institution offering everyone entrance, out of fairness, such a policy requires that students be properly assessed for appropriate placement. Students need to have a reasonable chance of success, while not wasting time in classes that are too easy. In 2007 the College updated its testing programs by adopting the COMPASS placement tests. We monitor the relationship between cut-off scores and course grades for evidence of proper placement, but need to do this more since only one change has been adopted. Between 80% and 85% of students pass the English classes that they are placed into by the COMPASS assessment tool, which indicates that the assessment is reliable.

We also help students get a good start upon entrance to the College via multiple small group orientations and readily available academic counseling. Students are usually seen within one week of requesting a counselor, and walk-in counseling is available for urgent needs. Students also often contact their counselors with small questions via email, since a student email account is now given to every new student.
Efforts to help students don’t always work, and students don’t always feel they are treated fairly (for example, over disputes about grades or tuition refunds). Although most academic complaints are handled informally with the faculty member in question, student complaints for academic disputes and refunds are handled by the Student Services Council, which meets each month. All information about such petitions is available in the student handbook. Student complaints are thus heard regularly by a large cross-section of students, staff, and faculty. Records of complaints have been inconsistently kept, but the Office of Records and Registration has recently improved the process.

Another ethical issue related to students, academic integrity, has been increasingly problematic because of technology. Avenues for plagiarism have increased exponentially with the Internet. Faculty members have been addressing the concern in several ways. First, many instructors have changed their assignments to make plagiarism more difficult; for example, assigning particular readings to consider rather than a general topic for a term paper. The downfall is that such changes often limit student choices and research. Second, all instructors include the prohibition on cheating and plagiarism in their syllabi. This information is also found in the catalog. Finally, Safe Assign, a plagiarism detection service, is available to all instructors for written assignments both to help deter and to help discover plagiarism. Vigilance against plagiarism is not only to “catch students in the act,” but also to instill the importance of ethical behavior in the students themselves.

One particular area of growing concern for academic integrity is with online courses. It is difficult to know if the students taking the courses are the ones doing the work. The College is aware of this issue and a student integrity subcommittee was established in July 2008 to make recommendations to the College at large. All students must have a login and password to access their courses, and some instructors have on-campus testing with ID verification to help avoid some of these problems.

The College also has made a great effort to provide a positive and fair learning environment for students of all backgrounds. The number of clubs has blossomed on campus over the past ten years with strong support from the College. (One exception is an incident in 2004, when the College attempted to stop the Gay-Straight Alliance from having a drag show on campus. The show was eventually allowed and was a resounding success, and since that time, the College has been very supportive of the activities of the GSA and other clubs.)

Finally, the College also protects and supports student integrity by scrupulously following laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and sometimes going beyond such requirements. For example, when building the library and the Student One-Stop Center, the College completed a renovation of its elevators to ensure easier access by disabled students. The College also has an office of Special Services that provides a long list of support to special populations. Also, student privacy is closely guarded and has been helped by new technology. Information on FERPA is available at the College’s Web site. The faculty have been trained regarding privacy rights. In addition, crime reports are available as required by law, and are printed in the student handbook and published on the College Web site.

The College employs various means to comply with federal disclosure requirements; for example, postcards are mailed to employees with crime report information, the price of attendance is on the College Web site, and so forth. The College plans to develop one location on the Web site in 2010 and 2011 to contain all information required to be disclosed.
**The College’s Ethical Relationships with Personnel**

Overall, Muskegon Community College works fairly and honestly with its employees. There are three unions on campus and each enjoys a good working relationship with the administrative staff. Grievances are handled in a timely manner according to contract stipulations, but are often handled informally before problems get to that level. All unionized employees (faculty, custodial and clerical) are provided contracts outlining their rights and responsibilities. There has not been a job action at the College since the 1970s due to this good relationship. The College has also resisted trends to continually increase the use of adjunct instructors. While the number of full-time faculty has dropped somewhat over the years, in the most recent reporting year, the College ranked fifth highest among the 28 Michigan community colleges in percentage of faculty who were full-time (36%).

The Human Resources Office does its best to make sure hiring is handled fairly and pursued transparently with a commitment to equal opportunity. Adjunct faculty positions are advertised locally, and full-time job openings are highly publicized in the Muskegon, Grand Rapids, and Kalamazoo newspapers, and on the Web in national publications such as *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and Higheredjobs.com. Additional advertising occurs at the discipline level. For example, the recent philosophy position was advertised in the American Philosophical Association’s “Jobs for Philosophers” online publication. Often it is these specialized national publications that bring in the most highly qualified candidates. These efforts ensure that a national, diverse pool of talent is made available to hiring committees.

One concern is that often the employment process is not completed until late in the academic year. For example, full-time faculty are often hired over the summer while other institutions are hiring in late winter or early spring for the following school year. The available talent pool may be depleted as a result, and equally important, candidates are left hanging with regard to their job prospects long after applying. In-depth deliberation occurs among current employees and staff when considering full-time hires, but adjunct faculty candidates are often quickly chosen by department chairs due to time, limited availability, and dire need.

On the positive side, the Board of Trustees approves every new hire and recently developed, jointly with several constituents on campus, a nepotism policy to avoid potential conflicts of interest. Thus, the Board does well in overseeing and approving personnel decisions.

Pay at the College receives mixed reviews. The good news: All full-time employees receive generous benefits and competitive pay, and the turnover rate at the College is incredibly low. A recent “Years of Service” luncheon honored two employees with forty years of service, eleven with at least thirty years, and nineteen with at least twenty. Full-time employees rarely leave the College and are rarely fired. Also, the College has gone above and beyond the law in some instances. Student workers were not part of required increases in the minimum wage, yet the College extended it to them as a matter of fairness and goodwill.

The bad news is that adjunct faculty pay is an area of concern. Adjuncts receive no sick leave or personal days and are paid at a lower rate than competing community colleges in our area of West Michigan. Also, our calculation of teaching load puts a limit on the total dollars an adjunct can earn.
A final area of our treatment of employees is the outsourcing of three departments: food service, the bookstore, and information technology. Generally, these transitions have gone well and were needed for cost savings and/or technical expertise. Once again going beyond what was legally required, the College has made sure that employees who were not hired by the new employers were offered other opportunities within the College.

◆ The College’s Ethical Relationships with the Community

We believe the community continues to have an overall positive view of the College, and anecdotal evidence suggests the College is perceived to have strong integrity. A primary source for these perceptions comes from recent articles in local news media.

The community’s perceptions are both helped and harmed by the College’s efforts for transparency. All Board meetings are open to the public and the decisions of the College are open for all to see. This openness helps transparency which is a central part of integrity. The harm comes from the public also seeing when people at the College disagree. A recent president had a rather tumultuous relationship with some members of the Board that was well reported in the local newspaper. But perhaps the image of the College as a place for the free exchange of ideas is enhanced with such an approach.

Advertising has changed lately to better represent the College and what it does. The past saw the College trying to sell its product as an athletics company might (a la Nike’s “Just Do It”). “MCC Rocks My World” and “Change Your Mind” are examples of slogans that were used in recent years. In contrast, today’s advertisements show examples of the career options that we offer and give practical reasons for choosing Muskegon Community College such as our low costs and transferability. These new advertisements help uphold the College’s integrity by honestly and informatively presenting what we have to offer. One thing we must keep an eye on is that these advertisements tend to emphasize certificates or degrees in technical, business, and allied health programs. A person perusing these ads might not see anything about our liberal arts/transfer program.

The Web site has also improved the availability of honest and accurate information about the College. Printed documents are still widely available, but the Web site has become a single clearinghouse of important documents such as the catalog, the student handbook, various policy manuals, the schedule of classes, and so forth, easily available to students and the community.

◆ The College’s Practice of Fiscal Responsibility

The College operates with high integrity when handling its fiscal resources. The College’s finances are provided to the Board in a detailed and timely manner, and the Board takes its charge of overseeing the College’s funds seriously. Members frequently ask questions and request additional information. Also, each year the College’s finances are audited by an independent accounting firm and have passed legal requirements each time. A notice of the budget is published yearly in the local newspaper and can be supplied to anyone upon request. A summary of the budget is available on the College’s Web site. Special grant programs such as the Perkins grant are audited by the Michigan Department of Energy, Labor, and Economic Growth.
The implementation of the College’s new integrated software system has greatly aided the College in providing timely and detailed reports to the Board to Trustees. The College has also been very honest about reporting to the state the enrollment numbers that provide the basis for state funding. The new software system and establishment of the Office of Institutional Research and Development have once again helped in the timely and accurate reporting of these numbers.

While doing this good work, the Board and administration face the challenge of being constantly vigilant. There was a setback a few years ago when a bookkeeper was found stealing over $100,000 and possibly more over the years. New rules and regulations were quickly put into place to ensure that this does not occur again, and the guilty person is obviously no longer employed by the College.

◆ The College’s Ethical Relationships with Its Environment

The College’s efforts to act ethically toward our environment starts with one of our core values: to maintain and enhance our uniquely beautiful campus. Therefore, whenever new construction is proposed, preserving our environment is a major consideration. A land use committee meets periodically to address environmental issues. Our most recent example is our new library and information technology center built around existing trees and taking advantage of the existing topography.

But aesthetic considerations were also coupled with another major concern: saving energy. The new building is designed to be 19-20% more energy efficient than current building code standards. These designs include skylights and a curved glass wall with a 131-foot radius, two stories high, and over 100 feet long for greater natural lighting. A multi-stack chiller includes ten units rather than one or two as previously, allowing closer energy monitoring. An in-floor heating system adds to energy savings. There are other ways we reduce energy:

- **On the roof of our former library, we installed a green roof with plantings that will aid in maintaining heat in offices below.**
- **Paper recycling is ongoing and we have recently initiated a lunchroom recycling effort.**
- **We have reduced the area of grass that is mowed. In 2009 the physical plant staff designated specific areas of the College campus that will no longer be maintained by the grounds staff. These areas will be left to revert to their natural state. This will result in staff hours being used on other projects and reduced fuel and machine maintenance costs.**
- **We also save energy by closing the campus around Christmas, and cooling only parts of the building in summer. For the past three seasons, the campus has been closed between the Christmas and New Year’s holidays. This 10- to 12-day period of limited activity has resulted in energy savings in both natural gas and electricity.**

In addition to these measures, we also show care for the environment in our curriculum. We have recently approved a program in wind and solar energy that leads to a certificate, and have also approved a biofuels certificate. Other programs include courses in environmental ethics and environmental science.

Environmental concern is evidenced by clubs supported by the College. Automotive students, for example, have built an E100 (pure ethanol) race car and a fully licensed still that allows them to produce their own E100. In addition, automotive students (in collaboration with CAD,
machining, and electricity students) have built an electric dragster with which they will be attempting to set a world speed record.

The newly formed MCC Garden Club, Phi Theta Kappa, and the food service department are working together to grow organic vegetables on campus and to reduce landfill waste through recycling organic waste generated on campus. The Geography Club and Nature Club are involved in planning activities that help all students on campus be more aware of environmental issues.

Creating an Atmosphere of Integrity

A necessary way to ensure integrity is to have it constantly discussed and supported. As has been shown, Muskegon Community College does a good job doing what it claims, following the law, and often going beyond what is legally and morally required.

Other unique ways the College supports integrity are its logic/ethics requirement for graduation in the Associate in Science and Arts program, and support for the new Ethics Institute (established in 2008). The logic/ethics requirement attempts to ensure that all transfer students have the terminology, theory, and critical thinking skills to handle ethical issues in college and beyond. The new Ethics Institute has held several seminars on campus on ethical issues and has offered support to the community on ethical issues, thanks in large part to a grant from the Community Foundation for Muskegon County. The faculty member who established the Ethics Institute was granted a semester-long sabbatical in early 2007 to study the issue. The Ethics Institute will continue to offer faculty and staff training on ethics and additional seminars for students and the community in the future, if funding is available. It is these commitments as well as a long tradition of providing students with an honest, just, and helpful experience that makes Muskegon Community College an organization that protects and fosters integrity.

Strengths Related to Core Component 1e

• The Board does a good job overseeing College finances and is given a thorough account of those finances
• Pay and benefits for full-time employees are very good
• Students are treated with fairness, consistency, and honesty
• The College avoids using inflated or inaccurate statements of job placement
• Our advertisements and recruitment of students are positive but restrained
• The College has implemented an Ethics Institute to promote campus and community dialogue on ethics
• The College practices environmental ethics in its energy savings, curriculum, and clubs

Challenges Related to Core Component 1e

• Adjuncts are paid less than most other competing colleges in the area and they receive no sick leave, personal days, or benefits
• The College has outsourced three functions, leaving some employees in those areas with reduced pay and retirement benefits
• Academic integrity on campus has become a growing concern, especially with online classes
• There is no statement in our mission about integrity
CRITERION TWO  
*Preparation for the Future*

*Muskegon Community College’s allocation of resources and its processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate its capacity to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.*
CRITERION TWO  ♦ Preparing for the Future

Introduction to Criterion Two

Muskegon Community College is preparing for the future, and the examination of the next four core components will show that the College’s preparation is based on realistic evaluations of both internal and external trends. Our examination will demonstrate confidence that our substantial financial, human, facilities, and technology resources will allow us to respond to future challenges. We will also demonstrate that our wise use of these resources helps us achieve institutional effectiveness. Finally, never before has the College had as many formal long-range plans to help guide us, and all of these plans focus directly or indirectly on how to improve student learning. Because we are planning realistically for the future and possess sufficient resources to support our goals, we believe that Muskegon Community College meets the expectations of Criterion Two.

Core Component 2a: The organization realistically prepares for a future shaped by multiple societal and economic trends.

Summary of Core Component 2a
Muskegon Community College has always planned, but rarely as formally as within the past decade. Our planning processes include both internal and external research. In addition, we keep three important issues in mind when planning: our relationship to a multicultural society, our promotion of innovation, and our historical heritage. Finally, the College has clearly defined who makes planning decisions. Because Muskegon Community College realistically, although imperfectly, prepares for a future shaped by multiple societal and economic trends, we believe we are accomplishing the requirements of Core Component 2a.

♦ Planning by Analyzing the Campus

Muskegon Community College’s planning has historically been realistic and sensible, and the results have been high-quality programs, services, and facilities. Never before, however, have we had so many interconnected formal plans. Over the past ten years the College has had three major plans that have set the course for the institution: the 2000 Campus Master Plan, the Strategic Plan 2002-2006, and the Strategic Plan 2006-2011. These set the stage for long-range plans in various areas of the college: the Academic Master Plan 2007-2011, the Enrollment Management Plan 2008-2011, and the Information Technology Strategic Plan 2007-2010. In spring 2010, a new campus master plan and a new strategic plan are being completed.

The starting point for our planning processes has been to take a realistic internal look at what the College needs to maintain current programming and to be ready for what comes next. For example, the 2000 Campus Master Plan scrutinized such things as classroom usage, traffic flow, parking lot capacity, utilities, computer access for students, and the location and flow of classrooms and services on campus. This close analysis was continued later by the long-range strategic planning committee, which was responsible for the Strategic Plan 2002-2006. The committee made an inventory of technology aids, such as digital data projectors and computers in classrooms and labs, and conducted a comprehensive study of the numbers of hours and types of activities that took place in each room of the College.

Another careful internal examination, in this case related to technology needs, led to the creation of the Information Technology Strategic Plan 2007-2010. The process began its internal environmental scan with two needs assessments—a teaching with technology assessment and
an administrative technology assessment. The teaching assessment was completed by seventy full-time faculty members (76% response rate). The administrative technology needs assessment was completed by seventy-nine administrative staff members (66% response rate). Technology satisfaction surveys again were sent to faculty, staff and students in February 2010. Such internal scrutiny was employed by all our planning groups.

◆ Planning by Analyzing Our Community and Larger Society

The College has created realistic plans by looking not only internally but externally. The Strategic Plan 2006-2011 developed a clear focus by adapting ideas from an article in The Chronicle of Higher Education entitled “Ferment and Change: Higher Education 2015” (November 25, 2005). The article outlines five trends impacting our future: changing life cycles as our nation’s population ages; America’s growing vulnerability in science and technology; the need to understand other cultures and languages; increasing challenges to higher education’s commitment to social mobility; and public support for other ways of learning. The strategic planning team identified our own trends and the impact they would have on Muskegon Community College and the communities we serve, in the areas of economics, education/technology, political developments, and social factors.

In addition, the Academic Master Plan’s appendices clearly show the attention that was given to environmental scanning. Factors such as demographic shifts in age, area school enrollment, levels of educational attainment, places of birth, citizenship and languages spoken in the home, and employment rates were all examined. Trends in technology and critical occupations for our area as well as the fastest growing careers in the country were explored. These data were made available to all who worked on the Academic Master Plan and served as the baseline of information from which the plan was created.

The creators of the Enrollment Management Plan also used several external environmental scans. They contracted with Noel-Levitiz, a higher education consulting firm, to solicit input on the state of the College’s enrollment from the views of students, staff and selected segments of the community. The final evaluation from Noel-Levitiz, the “Enrollment Opportunities Analysis,” was produced in October 2006. In addition, three focus group sessions representing the educational, business, and nonprofit sectors of greater Muskegon were conducted in 2007 by City Vision, a nonprofit consulting firm.

◆ Three Issues Related to Planning

While the College formed plans based on internal and external research, three issues were also analyzed: the College’s function in a multicultural society, innovation, and the College’s heritage.

The needs of a multicultural society are evident in the Academic Master Plan through the recommendations that English as a Second Language be investigated for incorporation into our learning skills program, that American Sign Language be offered, and that foreign language offerings be expanded. Incorporating international courses into several different departments, and offering international travel and study opportunities for students and staff, also went into this planning document.

The Enrollment Management Plan also addresses the College’s function in a multicultural society by developing goals for a recruitment plan for diverse markets and more flexible course offerings (including online) for students who cannot attend traditional day classes.
The evidence that Muskegon Community College’s environment is supportive of innovation and change can best be seen by observing the dramatic, sweeping, and often traumatic changes of the last five years. During that period the College’s bookstore, food service operations, and information technology areas were all outsourced. The College made massive changes in the use of technology and information, including a very aggressive schedule of converting our records from a legacy system to Datatel Colleague. At the same time the technology conversion was taking place, physical remodeling of several areas of the College was occurring. People deeply involved in the conversion to Colleague, who were also key people in the day-to-day operations of the College, were relocated to temporary quarters for the duration of the construction.

Three aspects of Muskegon Community College’s history and heritage are held in such high esteem that they are mentioned in many planning sessions and documents, and are the constants as we move forward. The first is the recognition that maintaining and enhancing our natural and built environment is a core value for the College. As noted in the Executive Summary of the 2000 Campus Master Plan, “Preservation of the unique and environmentally sensitive outdoor quality of Muskegon Community College must be the first and guiding priority for all changes, improvements, expansion, and development within the College campus. It is a community asset for its beauty and environmental benefits to the greater Muskegon area.”

This concern for the environment was strong when the campus was built. The main building on Muskegon Community College’s campus was designed by Alden B. Dow, a Michigan architect. His Web site includes this description: “His special interest in landscape and his distinctive concern for nature is manifest in his educational complexes. Outstanding examples include Muskegon Community College where buildings span an existing stream…” Additions to the College have been planned to blend into the design of the original building to the point that a visitor might have a difficult time distinguishing the original from the new.

The second important aspect of the College’s history and heritage is recognition of the commitment to quality programs at Muskegon Community College. The Academic Master Plan 2007-2011 listed principles to accomplish its purposes, including improving student performance by fostering a culture of excellence in learning as our primary focus, preparing students to successfully transfer to four-year institutions, and focusing on hiring the most qualified instructors and nurturing their professional growth. In addition, the Enrollment Management Plan 2008-2011 identifies students as obviously essential to meeting the mission of the College and states that providing a high-quality student experience promotes enrollment persistence and growth.

This commitment to quality education is also clear in the Information Technology Strategic Plan 2007-2010, which includes a vision statement for the Office of Information Technology. A portion of the statement reads: “The Office of Information Technology facilitates reliable access to College resources that are dependable, consistent, easy to use, and encourage connections among individuals, the College, the local community, and the world beyond Muskegon County.”

The third important aspect of the College’s history and heritage is its open-door nature. All are welcome to enter, people of any age, people who have already earned college degrees, as well as those who are just starting out in college. And we not only invite them to enter, we feel a serious responsibility to provide the tools and the support necessary for students to achieve their goals. We are open door in both name and in spirit.
**Shared Responsibility for Planning**

Authority for decision making about organizational goals is generally well articulated. The *MCC Board of Trustees Policy Manual* lists eight duties and responsibilities of the Board, including the responsibility to provide for long-range plans. The charge for strategic planning has been given to the College’s President. Planning in each of the four major areas of the college—Academic Affairs, Student Services, Administrative Services, and Information Technology—is assigned to a member of the President’s cabinet. All plans support and are consistent with the strategic plans.

In addition, the Board of Trustees has established permanent advisory councils for each of the major service functions of the College. Each council monitors the implementation of its related plan; for example, the Instructional Affairs Council monitors the *Academic Master Plan*. The council system is longstanding and has proven to be a very effective means of campus-wide communication and representative decision-making. Unfortunately, in some instances, the oversight of plans by councils is nominal. For example, the Coordinating Council receives only infrequent updates on the strategic plan.

Muskegon Community College is fortunate to have such a long tradition of providing high-quality programs and services, effective shared governance, and a history of planning to meet current and future needs. Planning is not always easy, but there is the recognition on campus that it is vital to the future of our college and the future success of our students.

**Strengths Related to Core Component 2a**

- *For the first time, Muskegon Community College has an academic master plan, an enrollment management plan, and an information technology strategic plan*
- *All planning documents are based on internal and external research*
- *We are not creating plans and ignoring them*
- *We uphold important aspects of our heritage*
- *Our three most recent presidents have valued planning*

**Challenges Related to Core Component 2a**

- *The latest strategic plan and the Academic Master Plan say almost nothing about education in a multicultural society*
- *Monitoring of plans by the councils is nominal*
CORE COMPONENT 2b: The organization’s resource base supports its educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.

Summary of Core Component 2b
Muskegon Community College has substantial financial, human, facilities and technology resources enabling us to maintain and plan for improved educational quality. The College takes seriously the financial challenges we face with the state of the Michigan economy and changes in state funding. We have a substantial and well-managed resource base and ongoing plans to develop those resources, and we allocate those resources to the right places to best serve our students. The College has been astute in developing new revenue and in making changes to save money. The College’s greatest resources in meeting its mission are its talented faculty and staff. Finally, the College’s commitment to student learning has led to major investments in facilities and technologies, and we anticipate future changes. Despite these strengths, the College still must resolve financial issues dealing with outreach efforts, an ongoing training plan, staffing for library labs, a technology upgrades schedule, and employing a new campus master plan. Overall, the College fulfills the standards related to Core Component 2b.

◆ Financial Resources

Muskegon Community College has the financial resources to fulfill its mission. According to the 2009-2010 MCC Budget, the general fund revenues include 28% from state aid, 32% from property taxes, and 38% from tuition and fees. General fund expenditures include 50% for instruction, 8% for instructional support, 14% for student services, 12% for administration, 9% for information technology, and 7% for the physical plant.

Because of waning state assistance over the past few years, the College sometimes has to make difficult decisions regarding tuition and fee increases. The Business Administration Council first discusses what the anticipated revenues will be from the State and from local taxes and prepares various scenarios. They present these scenarios to the Board of Trustees in early spring. The Board uses these assumptions, along with input from other staff members, to set appropriate tuition and fee rates. The Board has historically kept tuition increases low, in the 3% to 5% range. They are keenly aware of the population we serve, which relies on financial aid and low tuition in order to attend college. The Board also receives reports on the projected effect of different tuition increases on various types of students (for example, those receiving Pell grants or those relying on loans).

Our budget planning is a completely open process. The College has an independent audit of our finances conducted every year, with the results presented at open meetings. Furthermore, when the upcoming year’s budget is being prepared, the drafts are discussed at open Board meetings. Before the final budget is approved, the notice of that Board meeting is published in local newspapers, and interested parties may request the proposed budget in advance of the meeting. Internally, budget information is shared with all bargaining units before and after the final budget is approved. All departments are involved in budget requests for the upcoming year and all requests must include justification.

The College maintains a large fund balance. The General Fund fund budget for 2009-2010 is approximately $31 million, but including other fund balances brings the total closer to $42 million. The goal is to maintain a General Fund fund balance of 15% of the total budget, which would provide for approximately three months of operating money in the event of a disaster.
Regarding debt, the College has bonding capacity, meaning we do not have to put millage requests on a public ballot. We recently sold bonds for the Career Tech Center (being repaid by the local intermediate school district) and for the library and Student One-Stop. We are paying off our debt; in fact, our Composite Financial Indicator score has increased from 1.0 to 3.2 in the latest Annual Institutional Data Update submitted to the Higher Learning Commission.

Although in the past we have operated on a year-by-year budget, we have recently made three-year projections. With the harsh economy in Michigan, property tax revenues are decreasing, so it is difficult to anticipate State aid for the upcoming year, much less for the next three, but we are attempting to use foresight to make some logical predictions.

◆ Hiring Wisely

Although our financial resources are solid, the administration and Board are looking to develop other revenue in response to both waning state funding and to various needs cited in our long-ranging planning documents. For example, in the last five years the Board approved three new positions: a director of institutional research and development, an associate vice president of student services, and a director of community relations. A key component of the new student services position is to enhance the experiences of College applicants, leading to increased enrollment and persistence. Duties of the director of community relations include outreach to College alumni and the community to ultimately lead to increased giving to the College’s foundation. The College also sought out and hired a president whom the Board believes has strong fundraising abilities.

These hires are already bearing fruit. Our institutional researcher and grants professional, hired in 2006, has been the guiding force in obtaining new grants totaling $1,139,250 in 2008 and $1,287,274 in 2007. This new office has successfully identified funding sources, developed grant proposals, facilitated proposal design team meetings, monitored grant-funded projects, conducted research in support of proposal development, and provided research services as requested by College departments. As stated in the report of the previous HLC site visit, “Missing from the administrative structure is a centralized institutional research function. Consequently institutional research is fragmented.” This is no longer the case. The researcher’s office is now the clearing-house for all research and grant-funded projects. This one position has led to multiple revenue streams, previously sorely lacking.

The Associate Vice President of Student Services was hired in 2006 and charged with the tasks of overhauling and improving recruitment, enrollment and retention. Since tuition is 38% of our revenue stream, this hiring was a key investment. In addition, the Enrollment Management Plan guided this institution-wide, research-driven system designed to locate, attract, and retain students. Three recruiters now have expanded regional territories. Completely new orientation procedures use a state-of-the-art computer classroom. This has led to hundreds of new orientation sessions—an important tool, we believe, in retaining students.

Enrollment numbers have reached record highs during the time of all these changes. In fall 2008 total enrollment was 4,786 students; by fall 2009 our headcount was 5,144. The College realistically is expecting a significant influx of new students for fall semester 2010.

We are not certain why students come to us, but massive unemployment in Muskegon County (16% in December 2009) seems to be a clear reason. Enrollment in programs or classes that lead directly to employment has increased dramatically, especially for a number of older, nontraditional students. These students create revenue from national sources, such as the Trade Readjustment
Act, and from the State’s No Worker Left Behind program. Tough economic times also have no doubt persuaded some students to spend time at the community college before transferring.

We also don’t know much about why students leave us. The College has implemented a tracking system that will identify student intent when filling out an application and each time they register. Interventions are planned once the system begins to produce meaningful data, and the tracking system will likely become a key component in the College’s work with Achieving the Dream in the next few years. Ironically, if enrollment increases because of retention policies, it is not altogether clear whether more students supply a net gain in revenue or simply add to costs.

While the College had the foresight to invest in three new positions to bring in new revenue, and to hire a president who is expected to increase alternative funding, many believe the investment in full-time faculty reaps the greatest benefits. Controversy centers on the perception that full-time retiring faculty are replaced with adjunct faculty, a strong concern of the Faculty Association. Faculty see hiring and replacing as the key to maintaining the quality education that recruits and retains the students and thus produces revenue. Understaffing is costly in many ways. Department chairs struggle with adjunct issues: finding qualified faculty, keeping qualified faculty, repeatedly training new adjuncts, managing student complaints related to adjuncts, and many other issues. While the faculty see the importance of wise hiring practices and understand the multiple costs in new full-time hires, they believe faculty are at the heart of the institution, and that we need more full-timers to serve our students best. Fortunately, discussions have been open and honest among all parties.

**Developing Additional Resources and Funding**

Beyond hiring, the College has looked to many sources to secure new revenue, foster growth and be responsive to unanticipated changes. One direction is to focus on relationships with the State of Michigan where important funding decisions are made. Our new president has experience in dealing with state legislators and agencies. When there are opportunities to do so, Muskegon Community College submits proposals to the State for capital outlay projects. The most recent request was for an art/media center, possibly to be built in downtown Muskegon. The College is also seeking support for a much-needed science laboratory center. The College most recently received capital outlay funds from the State to help construct the Student One-Stop.

In addition to state funding, a primary goal of the *Strategic Plan 2006-2011* has been to enhance partnership opportunities and expand the College’s presence in outlying areas. We have tackled this vigorously, and previously untapped enrollment markets and enrollment-generated funds are growing. The Newaygo County Regional Educational Services Agency now partners with the College to offer multiple courses and dual-enrollment opportunities and has welcomed the College to their new educational center. The Newaygo County Economic Development Organization has signed an exclusive agreement with the College to offer dual-enrollment and medical billing clerk courses for an area employer needing over 100 trained employees. The ultimate goal is to provide that community with multiple College offerings, a possible satellite campus in this northern town. We continue off-campus extension courses, a total of thirty-five courses in fifteen locations per semester. We are in the process of developing a three-year rolling schedule for academic extension courses in the surrounding counties that will provide a structured progression for degree and certificate program completion.
There are, however, concerns with the extent and the effectiveness of our outreach efforts. Some regions of our service area remain under-served and opportunities need to be investigated that would enable us to reach more citizens with academic, non-credit, and enrichment programming. For example, we have identified the need to investigate a location south of the campus, in Ottawa County, which is considered to be part of the College’s service area. These residents could benefit from the lower tuition of two years at the community college, and benefit the College as well since they are outside of our tax authority and pay higher tuition. At a minimum, we could acquire or lease space allowing for two classrooms, meeting space, and office space in that county.

Another way to generate funds is the crucial tuition payment plan implemented in fall 2008 which has decreased the number of students dropped for non-payment. First, this system allows students to make two to four interest-free monthly payments, rather than having to pay all costs up front. Those with pending aid can defer payment. These two popular options have helped us retain students previously dropped for non-payment, with approximately 300 students enrolled in the regular plan and 600 in the pending aid plan in a typical semester.

Cost Reduction and Saving

Muskegon Community College continues to explore cost containment and expenditure reduction initiatives. One revenue-saving action is the College’s decision to change eight-week spring and summer semesters into one twelve-week summer semester. The goals of this change included managing institutional costs (allowing for a shutdown in late August), eliminating low summer enrollment, and capturing new students home for the summer from their four-year institutions. In summer 2009, we saw a 32% increase in college guest applications. This has enhanced who we serve in the community and has secured new revenue.

Another example is the Board’s approval in 2009 of an initiative that will address major, long-term energy savings. The Siemens Corporation was contracted to perform an exhaustive energy analysis and recommend specific infrastructure improvements that would result in energy savings in heating, ventilation and air-conditioning systems. The College’s goal is to reap the energy savings sooner, rather than doing small changes over a number of years.

These are not only cost saving initiatives but steps in making the College a more ethical consumer of resources, an institution that takes our impact on the community seriously.

In 2009, the College completed its second annual “Beat the Budget” program, consisting of faculty and staff brainstorming sessions, newsletters with suggestions and tips on saving money, and updates and emails with examples of specific cost savings. All point to the College’s careful and frugal use of resources.

Human Resources

The College has well-qualified, dedicated and effective employees. Our talented workforce includes 97 full-time faculty; approximately 180 adjunct faculty; 55 administrative, professional, and support staff; 21 custodial maintenance employees; and 44 educational support staff working to support our mission. All employees are assessed through a strictly monitored evaluation process. We have a dedicated and stable workforce, with many employees spending the majority of their career at the College, enhancing both instruction and College operations.
The College is judicious in its use of its human resources. In 2008, the majority of custodial/maintenance staff were moved to an overnight shift to increase access to all areas of the College and increase efficiency. Also, instead of having a plumber, electrician, and an HVAC technician on staff, we now contract this work to a third party, which has been a cost saving. The 2000 HLC/NCA site visit report stated, “The College should explore the possibility of creating an orientation program for custodial/maintenance employees.” All custodial/maintenance employees are now part of our employee orientation but have additional training in those duties unique to their jobs; for example, blood-borne pathogens, safety, HazMat, and others.

The College is careful about maintaining a lean staff. The Student One-Stop and Datatel Colleague projects were incentives to examine all Administrative, Professional and Support (APS) staff, leading to multiple shifts in positions. Four generalist positions were created and student services staff members are now cross-trained in multiple areas: registration, student self-service, cashier and switchboard. Retirees were not replaced and some positions were combined. The results have been a wise use of human resources.

Muskegon Community College invests in its administrative, professional, clerical and support staff to insure a talented workforce. The College supports staff development in three ways. First, all APS contracts provide fiscal support for continuing education and development. Many take advantage of this support to complete degrees, engage in professional development, and benefit themselves with such things as wellness training.

Second, funds are dedicated for staff attendance and membership in conferences, seminars and professional organizations. Approximately thirty APS employees have attended a professional conference in the past three years, paid by the College.

College staff members are also well-represented in vital professional organizations, often in leadership roles directly relevant to the jobs they perform, as diverse as the Association for Institutional Research and the Michigan Truck Safety Commission. Involvement ranges in levels from local (Datatel User Group) to state (Michigan Community College Student Services Association) to national (National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators).

Third, the College itself has offered multiple training and professional development opportunities, many in conjunction with the new Student One-Stop and Datatel Colleague system. There were over 100 on-site training sessions for people involved in those transitions. More recently, there has been a marked increase in trainings offered in various software applications.

While training for Datatel Colleague and the One-Stop were huge and ultimately successful undertakings, one challenge has been creating an ongoing training plan. The HLC report of the 2000 visit stated that, “It may be helpful to consider creating a joint faculty/administration/staff development council to examine campus training needs for all groups and coordinate such activities.” Human Resources may seem the place for the training to originate, and they do indicate the intention to do so. Some major steps have been taken in the last year in the direction of offering staff development by our conference and catering center.

◆ The Hendrik Meijer Library/Information Technology Center

The 2000 Campus Master Plan has been the general guide for all decisions made about investing in facilities. For specific facilities, we do our homework first, an indication of a forward-looking
Concern for educational quality. The plan included such major projects as the Library/Information Technology Center and the Student One-Stop.

The Hendrik Meijer Library/Information Technology Center opened on January 9, 2006. This major project began as an outgrowth of our 2000 NCA institutional self-study where the lack of physical library space was indicated as a major weakness which prevented the expansion of the library’s holdings and student computer work stations. “There is simply no room for growth in the library,” the NCA evaluation team wrote. Many issues had to be solved, including location, security, accessibility, and classrooms. Research indicated a cost benefit to building a new facility at the front of the main building. This location would solve all issues for less money and have the added benefit of locating the library front and center on the campus.

With wise forethought, financing was procured early and in phases. During the 2003 bonding of the Career Tech Center, the Board took advantage of exceptional interest rates to bond an additional $3 million for the eventual library project. This $3 million would be the necessary matching funds required by the State of Michigan when requesting capital outlay for the library project. Ultimately when the State funds were not available, bonds were procured for the additional financing with the excellent rates still available. (At this time $3 million was set aside for the upcoming Student One-Stop.) A major fundraising drive ensued, tapping employees and community members and ultimately netting 10% of the project and a $500,000 donation from the Fredrik Meijer Foundation. This fundraising experience was the impetus for revitalizing the College’s foundation. The library’s grand opening was in January 2006, and this new jewel has been a resounding success.

The proof of this success is in the substantial increased usage. Students are often drawn to the facility for their computing needs and are seamlessly introduced to multiple services that enhance their educational experience. Usage (engaging in a library service) has jumped dramatically as demonstrated below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>January 2001</th>
<th>January 2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total usage: 2,360 patrons</td>
<td>Total usage: 7,075 patrons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total visits: approx. 5,000 patrons</td>
<td>Total visits: approx. 14,000 patrons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2005</td>
<td>November 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Database usage: 2,382</td>
<td>Database usage: 16,732</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of available resources added to the number of times students use these resources does not in itself prove students are learning, but it certainly increases the probability. The library has 60,000 print books, access to over 23,000 online books, and subscriptions to over 17,000 journals, magazines and newspapers, many online, containing millions of full-text articles, with the number of resources growing daily. Such access can help student learning, especially in developing research skills.

This beautiful new library has features designed for students, faculty, staff, and community visitors. All areas are fully accessible, and a new elevator increased accessibility to the second and third floors of the main campus. Students now have their computer and information literacy needs met in one location instead of divided between the previous small, outdated computer lab and library. In our 2000 Self-Study Report, we indicated “[S]pace to expand computer labs or create additional labs remains a problem.” This problem has been solved.
The construction of the library was also an opportunity to increase our student-centered focus. New partnerships were procured with Barnes and Noble and our food service, Creative Dining, both providing in-kind funding for design and construction that resulted in the updated bookstore, the Brookside Café, and the Cyber Café. These independent contracts have led to substantial savings for the College. Also, the bookstore has been a steady source of income.

Despite all of the benefits of the library, some challenges still await a solution. Community attendance has jumped dramatically, so much so that there are times when computers must be designated as research/academic use only, because of visitors enjoying the free Internet and computer access. This occasional problem actually points to the draw of this beautiful facility and reminds us that while community members may come for Internet access, they are introduced to all that Muskegon Community College has to offer them.

Another issue has been staffing the computer labs with Information Technology office assistance. One full-time supervisor is available at night, but during the day, student workers are left to answer sometimes complicated computer questions. Library staff is often able to assist, but the combination of information literacy and computer assistance has been hard to address.

The library’s purposes are now multi-faceted, and these issues are the growing pains associated with a heavily used facility. Also, now that the computers are located at the front of the college, some students have requested computer and printing capabilities at a second location on campus. The Information Technology Council is addressing whether this is a viable option.

◆ **Student One-Stop Center**

Our most recent investment in facilities, the new Student One-Stop Center, began as part of the 2000 Campus Master Plan and an awareness of a growing national student one-stop movement. An overhaul of Student Services could accomplish two tasks: create an even more student-centered campus and provide a much-needed update to facilities. For five years, Student Services staff and administration researched best practices, attended a national video conference on “One Stop Shops,” and visited five Michigan community colleges. An “Enrollment Opportunities Analysis” report from Noel-Levitz, commissioned by the College in 2006, stated that “The deployment of a one-stop model for addressing student needs is clearly one that deserves continued support and the fact that its development is underway is a credit to current college leaders.” The project demolished current space and rebuilt office and service areas (20,500 square feet) to accommodate Counseling, Registration, Financial Aid, Enrollment Services, Student Life and Student Orientation. The central gathering spaces, Gerber Lounge and Student Union, were renovated with new ceiling/lighting and flooring treatments and seating enhancements. Restrooms adjacent to these areas were renovated including new fixtures, floor, wall and ceiling treatments. The ultimate goal was to offer the student convenient, seamless and comprehensive services to address varied needs. This goal has been accomplished.

◆ **Other Facility Improvements**

In addition to these comprehensive construction projects, the College has continued to update and remodel to maintain an attractive, safe and viable campus. A partnership with the intermediate school district’s Career Tech Center led to a new state-of-the-art graphics lab and classroom space and a dedicated Center for Teaching and Learning. Accessibility is continually improved with new automatic doors and restroom remodels, with five more updated in 2009. In conjunction with the
One-Stop project, a full remodel of the College Success Center (CSC) was completed in fall 2008, including an inviting international student area. The Tutoring Center was moved from the CSC to an independent office more centrally located for students. The Nursing Department also updated labs and other areas and added a clinic for partnerships with area health agencies. Administrative offices were more centrally located, improving communication and access after being dispersed throughout the campus. Other changes were an addition to the gymnasium, energy efficient lighting, total resurfacing of the parking lot, new VOIP phone systems, and new signage. These facility updates have kept the College current, contributing to attracting and retaining students and enhancing the learning environment, aiding our mission to improve student learning.

◆ Technology Resources

We have substantial technology resources that strengthen the quality of our educational programs. In August 2005, Muskegon Community College entered into an agreement with SunGard Higher Education to provide ongoing technology services to the College. We needed to rethink how technology was used in the educational process, as well as in support of general College administrative functions. We did not have sufficient expertise to meet the growing needs for information technology, particularly to implement an Enterprise Resource Planning system, as well as pursue improvements in how technology was used in the education process. To effectively achieve this goal, we partnered with an organization whose core mission and experience were in managing technology within higher education. The Office of Information Technology (OIT) uses the IT strategic plan, created by representatives from all College populations, to guide efforts in its annual tactical and budget plan. It also works hand-in-hand with the IT governance council. The 2009 update to the plan reports successful completion of many goals and new initiatives as approved by the planning committee and campus leaders.

The College has made major investments in Datatel Colleague ERP, Blackboard, campus-wide wireless implementation, lab upgrades, and individual student technology services. The new Datatel ERP was implemented in phases throughout 2006 and 2007. It enabled the core student services of admissions, records and registration, financial aid, curriculum management, and e-commerce to be integrated into a single system and available online. In addition, the modules that support the college’s human resources, payroll, finance, and reporting processes were integrated into the system. This eliminates multiple support systems housing redundant data and maintains a single source for all student and staff information. Along with the ERP system, the college implemented the WebAdvisor system, a Web-based portal used to support campus needs of registration, transcripts, bill paying, grade reporting, pay advice viewing, and many other administrative functions. These systems have now been integrated with Blackboard to allow for a more efficient workflow, enabling student access to classwork areas and maintaining the accuracy of all student data.

Blackboard has been our software platform since the inception of online education. In 2008 we upgraded to Blackboard 8, a major investment that allowed automation between Datatel and Blackboard. We hired a new Blackboard administrator in fall 2008 and continue to offer multiple levels of training.

In 2007, we implemented campus-wide wireless access. This was a major investment in accessibility and connectivity for students and guests, but its greatest asset is limiting non-college access to the network. This segregation limits the College from a variety of security threats. Without traversing our network, students and guests still have full use of the essential online tools. Students can readily access state-of-the-art computer stations and programs in labs and classrooms, essential to students’ daily educational endeavors.
Our technological resources have led to major improvements in staff day-to-day tasks and, most important, have provided individualized technology services to all students. The procedures for recruiting, testing and placing are now streamlined, thanks to multiple technological improvements. Placement testing is now available at remote sites due to the improved online COMPASS test. The new student application process is now fully online. Online availability of the bookstore, the ride board, the job board, the career research resources, and the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) documents have simplified the once time-consuming and complicated tasks that often frustrated students. A new student email system has improved College and faculty communication with students and eliminated multiple paper mailings including report cards and billing. Finally and most importantly, investment in technology has led to improved opportunities for student learning by providing useful tools that can benefit students.

One technology challenge being worked on is deciding when and which facilities and equipment should be upgraded. While funding is key to aggressively remaining current, a process for making these decisions (such as which labs need a shorter life cycle and which stations are underused) is again being developed. There are also ongoing concerns with balancing the increasing security concerns and requirements with the open learning environment desired by staff and students. The OIT and its end users take seriously their duty to be aware of and manage this careful balance.

In conclusion, the College’s financial, human, facility and technology resources support its educational programs and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.

**Strengths Related to Core Component 2b**
- We allocate our resources in the areas that provide the most benefit to our students
- We have a talented, committed workforce, and we continually invest in developing their skills
- We have made major facility and technology investments
- We have judiciously sought funding to create and maintain a state-of-the art, beautiful facility
- Our resources are well-managed, support our mission, and position us to continue in our future

**Challenges Related to Core Component 2b**
- There are some concerns with the extent and effectiveness of our outreach efforts
- We need to focus on creating an ongoing comprehensive employee training plan
- IT staffing for library computer labs has not been resolved
Core Component 2c: The organization's ongoing evaluation and assessment processes provide reliable evidence of institutional effectiveness that clearly informs strategies for continuous improvement.

Summary of Core Component 2c

In the previous section, Muskegon Community College was accurately portrayed as an institution that has appropriate resources that are employed wisely. In this section we will see one use of those resources: We evaluate institutional effectiveness through a combination of formal and informal systems. We have structures in place that help ensure that all institutional decisions are examined in connection with long-range planning goals and the mission. These structures are regularly re-examined for effectiveness. Evaluating the College should improve as our ability to gather useful data improves, but we need to do a better job of making decisions based on careful collection and analysis of data. In addition, actions in one area of the College may not be known to other areas, illustrating the need for better communication. Nevertheless, our honest efforts to achieve institutional effectiveness demonstrate we meet Core Component 2c.

Formal Systems and Evaluations

The ultimate guide to determining if the College is accomplishing its purposes effectively is the Mission Statement, an infrequently changed document. This stable focus does have the advantage of keeping our core values intact; all changes in the last twenty years have added something to the mission, never casting off some purpose we once thought important. Thus one component of institutional effectiveness is not straying from our mission’s core values.

Although our purposes have changed little, the times we live in have. The Board members who wrote as part of our mission twenty years ago to “Develop technical and vocational skills necessary…in the technologically sophisticated workplace…” probably didn’t envision a certificate in biofuels or gaming.

To keep the College effectively on course between maintaining the stable values of our mission, and allowing flexibility in carrying out these purposes, requires planning. We are re-examining our Strategic Plan 2006-2011; whether it will result in a new plan or more of an update remains to be seen. The Academic Master Plan 2007-2011 is also being scrutinized. The College has hired a consultant to help facilitate creation of a new campus master plan. At Muskegon Community College, we continually examine what our current goals should be in light of our mission and the particular times in which we live.

Our council system is another guiding force in measuring our institutional effectiveness. The five councils, each with bylaws establishing their purposes and cross-campus membership, may identify, investigate, and recommend policy and procedural matters appropriate to their function. The Board has established these permanent advisory councils to be equivalent to the major service functions of the College; therefore, since recommendations by each council occur after careful scrutiny, the councils added together continually evaluate overall institutional effectiveness. As part of these connections, each council is charged with implementing, revising and evaluating a specific institutional long-range plan:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Council</th>
<th>Plan</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Services Council</td>
<td>Enrollment Management Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Affairs Council</td>
<td>Academic Master Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Administration Council</td>
<td>Campus Master Plan and Budget Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Technology Council</td>
<td>Information Technology Strategic Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinating Council</td>
<td>Strategic Plan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Just as all the other plans are tied to the strategic plan, the councils are connected to the Coordinating Council. Each council’s proposals may be forwarded to the President, and in turn to the Board, or back to an appropriate council. This combination of plans and councils provides all employees and departments with an avenue to recommend and re-evaluate what we are doing as an institution.

Our plans and the councils themselves were examined and changed within the last five years. Before that time, only a strategic plan and facilities plan were in place; then, three new plans were created. We also jettisoned one of our councils because of lack of activity, connected the plans to appropriate councils, and changed the bylaws of the whole system.

For the most part, goals in plans are looked at yearly or quarterly, forming the crucial feedback loop to assure the system is working. The Instructional Affairs Council, one of our most active and effective councils since its focus is on student learning, is responsible for the Academic Master Plan. Every year the Vice President for Academic Affairs requires each department to evaluate how well it has met its goals and add new goals as needed. The Information Technology Council publishes a yearly long-range planning report with studies, graphs, and survey results for the full campus to review. The Enrollment Management Plan is looked at quarterly by the Student Services Council.

Some problems persist in really integrating the councils and plans and ensuring that the councils do more than merely receive progress reports. Communication problems occur as well. Minutes and agendas and other items from each council are hard to find on our Web site or our internal shared drive, and we have no reason to think anybody reads them except members of a particular council.

There is an additional concern by some that the councils are being bypassed, as recent decisions to increase our intercollegiate sports, revive our music offerings, and embark on international recruiting have been made without involvement of the councils. Although the College attempts to scrutinize its effectiveness via the various plans and councils, we tend to propose rather general goals (for example, “create a downtown presence” or “retain more students”). There are few benchmarks employed to concretely evaluate the success of a targeted proposal. Although we are improving, partly due to new efforts in institutional research and a vastly improved information management system, we do not always make data-informed decisions.

Another means of assessing and evaluating institutional effectiveness is to evaluate the employees. All employees are on a regular schedule of evaluation, including the President’s evaluation by the Board. The Administrative Professional Staff (APS), clerical staff, and custodial staff receive a written evaluation from a supervisor by March 1 each year. The primary purpose of this process is to assist employees in becoming more effective in carrying out their responsibilities. This yearly feedback allows for continuous improvement for the employee and consequently the organization. The faculty, APS, and custodial staff have contracts stipulating the process clearly, but the clerical

Bylaws of all councils may be found in the resource room.

The evaluation procedures for full-time and part-time faculty are detailed in the Faculty Master Agreement found in the resource room.
contract does not address evaluations specifically. Although the policy states that APS supervisors will write the yearly evaluations sent by Human Resources, complete compliance is not achieved.

We also have a number of forced financial checks that are built into our system, including grant reporting, financial aid reporting, the annual financial audit, and ultimately our HLC self-study. These processes, imposed by external bodies, continually indicate our good stewardship.

Finally, our comprehensive and ongoing commitment to assessment of student learning is one of our most important formal evaluation systems. Since student success is organizational success, we have made assessment a major focus of our institution. Our assessment efforts are described in Core Component 3a.

◆ Informal Systems

We also have a number of informal systems that evaluate the institution. For example, many employees provide monthly updates to APS supervisors, some informally in meetings, and others in a report. These serve as a monthly check on progress in long-range planning and other important day-to-day topics.

Department chairs annually update the Vice President for Academic Affairs by sending a progress report on goals established by the Academic Master Plan. These progress reports are stored locally on the common drive for transparency purposes. Other vice presidents update the President, who in turn updates the College in his monthly “Message from the President” in our “Campus Connections” newsletter, and the President updates the Board.

During registration, the Associate Vice President of Student Services provides weekly enrollment updates and e-grams to all employees about enrollment. These updates have served to inform all employees about one indicator of our institutional success.

The College has also hired firms to provide comprehensive analyses, getting external expertise on key processes in some areas. Noel-Levitz conducted a study of our enrollment processes in fall 2006. They offered many recommendations on how to fine-tune and align our admissions, financial aid and advising systems to better assist prospective and current students.

City Vision, a consulting group from nearby Grand Rapids, was commissioned to do focus groups with students, staff, faculty and community members about their perceptions regarding the College. These focus groups were designed to give us anecdotal feedback regarding how the College was perceived. The sessions were held in early spring 2007. Finally, a business process analysis was conducted with line-level student services staff and supporting departments to see how to streamline and align services on the eve of moving into the new Student One-Stop Center. These sessions were conducted during summer 2008 and were done under the auspices of a Datatel consultant.

Our new Colleague information management system has potential for a variety of new queries, giving us vast opportunities for data mining. Harnessing this tool in conjunction with the institutional research office will take coordination, which we are tackling now. Training on writing queries has begun through OIT, and the next step will be to coordinate all of the data. Our new institutional research office has been crucial in guiding survey efforts, and employees can now turn to this office to manage information needs. While many evaluations are going on campus-wide,
there has not been one place for this data to be stored and accessed by all. Valuable information has been gathered in multiple places, but it is often not shared with others. The plan is for the institutional research office to become the repository, so data are accessible and not duplicated.

**Strengths Related to Core Component 2c**

- Muskegon Community College achieves institutional effectiveness by adhering to our purposes as stated in the mission, creating plans to carry out those purposes during changing times, and implementing specific ways to meet our plans’ goals through our council system.
- We regularly examine the effectiveness of our formal evaluative structures.
- Membership in the council structure is made up of representatives of all campus groups.
- The effectiveness of the institution is based in part on our evaluating the effectiveness of our employees.
- We use a variety of informal practices that contribute to keeping our employee groups informed.

**Challenges Related to Core Component 2c**

- Communication needs to improve between our councils.
- The council system appears to be less involved in making certain recommendations for change.
- We need to strengthen the feedback loops in our plans by continuing to improve our efforts to regularly evaluate and update our plans.
- We need to coordinate campus-wide data gathering through the institutional research office to avoid duplication and increase accessibility.
Core Component 2d: All levels of planning align with the organization’s mission, thereby enhancing its capacity to fulfill that mission.

Summary of Core Component 2d
A decade ago the Muskegon Community College Board of Trustees adopted the 2000 Campus Master Plan. Although concerned primarily with the physical facilities and the technology needs of the College, it did set the stage for a decade of new plans. Since the last team visit, the College has adopted two formal strategic plans, and we are in the middle of revising a new one. For the first time, we have academic, enrollment management, and information technology plans, but the Campus Master Plan set precedents for those additional planning documents. First, all planning must put students first. Second, all planning should connect to the College’s mission and to other plans. Third, planning must be tied to the budget process. Fourth, our planning should be flexible. Finally, results of our planning should be evident in what we do. Most of what follows is about what we do, reflecting our view that actually implementing the goals of our plans is critical. Though all the plans present new challenges, these five principles are evident at Muskegon Community College and illustrate that we meet Core Component 2d.

◆ Planning Puts Students First

The 2000 Campus Master Plan team was led by an outside consultant with input and assistance from internal and external constituents: staff, faculty, administrators, students, the Board of Trustees, and members of the community. All subsequent plans have this example of how a plan is created with both internal and external representatives.

Far more important than demonstrating how to write a plan is the example the team set by having a vision for what they wanted to accomplish: a plan to serve all students. In fact, the subtitle of the plan is “Student-Centered Learning for the New Millennium.” The planning team created a clearly stated purpose: “The ultimate goal of this study was the development of [a] new planning framework to meet short and long-range goals consistent with the primary purposes and goals of the College.” The primary goal at Muskegon Community College is student learning.

The planning team was not only purposeful but realistic in arriving at goals: The College required that all conclusions and recommendations be achievable and able to be implemented in a phased way. Further, the conclusions must include sufficient flexibility to permit adjustments in long-range planning required to respond to changing educational, financial, and community needs.

The team also observed guidelines that were consistent with, and demonstrate, the College’s Mission:

- **College facilities, programs and services must be “student-centered,” creating the optimum environment for students to learn and grow**
- **The College is committed to making educational services available to all, taking full advantage of emerging technologies, partnerships, and networks**
- **Environmental quality and barrier-free issues must be considered in all facilities**
- **Maintaining and enhancing the natural and built environment is a core value of the College**
- **Facilities must be flexible, support teamwork, and provide a variety of learning environments toward the enhancement of lifelong learning**
- **We are committed to being responsive to the changing needs of the business community in order to provide service to retrain and re-equip the work force**
The 2000 Campus Master Plan guidelines were not identical to our Mission Statement, but certainly reinforced the Mission.

The master plan resulted in several recommendations related to the outdoor environment of the College, buildings, technology, and signage. Many of the recommendations became goals, which have become accomplishments. Two examples are particularly striking: the new library and the improvements in our use of technology.

The master plan is in need of an update, and the College’s Board is developing one in 2010. In the meantime, the plan’s priorities continue to be tied to the College’s budget through the “Repair, Replace, Renovate” fund. Budgeting for physical improvements and regularly scheduled maintenance is done on a five- to seven-year schedule,

◆ Strategic Planning

Overlapping the period covered by the facilities master plan, the Strategic Plan 2002-2006 was developed by a strategic planning committee made up of individuals from all areas of the College. Using our Mission Statement, annual goals from various departments on campus, data regarding our enrollment, and the community’s population trends, the committee identified hopes, fears, priorities, and strengths (by far, the longest list). The committee also defined the College’s current Vision Statement: “Building our community’s gateway to opportunities…creating the first and best choice for success.”

One clear example that demonstrates that what we plan to do becomes what we do, can be seen by looking at the nine strategic goals accomplished by the Strategic Plan 2002-2006. Each goal is tied to the College’s mission and all demonstrate the College’s awareness of the relationships among educational quality, student learning, and the diverse, complex, global, and technological world in which we all exist. Much of the plan has been successfully implemented.

• **Goal One**, “Improved Research,” has been accomplished with the hiring of a director of institutional research in 2006 and the new, comprehensive database we have with the Colleague software.

• **Goal Two**, “Non-Traditional Studies,” has been accomplished in a number of ways including developing and providing short-term training programs for unemployed workers, and dedicating one office and one staff person to be the primary connection point for non-traditional students.

• **Goal Three**, “Employee Assistance Program,” has been reached with the establishment of a 2003 contract with Work Life Services, for prepaid counseling services for College employees.

• **Goal Four**, “Service to Students,” was especially broad but the goal has been met as we have improved and streamlined our student services with a new Student One-Stop Center, services available online, and training for staff in utilizing the new technology to better service students.

• **Goal Five**, “Foster K-12 Relationships,” continues to be met as we offer many dual-enrollment and articulated credit opportunities for high school students.

• **Goal Six**, “Reorganization,” has been reached as the focus was the reorganization of the physical facility. Building the new library created a domino effect which led to upgrading the space in the old library to house administrative and business offices as well as the College Success Center, remodeling and relocating Student Services into the Student One-Stop Center,
Criterion Two ◆ Preparing for the Future

relocating the Tutoring Center and Student Life Offices, and remodeling and upgrading the Nursing Department.

- **Goal Seven**, “Quality Instruction,” is ongoing. The College has developed, provided space for, and staffed the Center for Teaching and Learning, which provides resources for faculty training, instructional design, space for adjunct faculty, and a variety of teaching resources.

- **Goal Eight**, “Innovation,” has happened most visibly in technical areas of instruction: an entrepreneurship program, an alternative energy wind and solar program, students building an electric drag racer and an ethanol fueled car, a gaming program, and others.

- **Goal Nine**, “Financial Stability and Integrity,” continues to be met. Annual audits by external auditors, annual budgets approved by the Board of Trustees, and internal controls all support our fiscal integrity.

◆ **Coordination of Plans**

The Strategic Plan 2002-2006 was followed by the Strategic Plan 2006-2011. This plan was developed, as with other plans, by a very diverse committee of thirty. Given that our mission defines the College as a center for lifelong learning, the size and breadth of the committee was seen as necessary. The College belongs to the community, and we developed this plan so that we can better know and respond to individual, community and global needs.

The Strategic Plan 2006-2011 recognizes the critical need for planning at multiple levels of the College. That plan identifies the top priority of the College is to “Develop and Implement Institutional Long Range Planning.” Of the six goals for planning identified with this priority, three have been made into documents (enrollment, academic, and information technology plans) and one is in process (an updated campus master plan). These three plans were thoroughly researched, compiled, articulated in written documents and group presentations, and now guide our decision making. The goals for two other proposed plans, the institutional development plan and the budget plan, are being accomplished without creating written plans.

All the new plans drew on data and expertise from a wide variety of sources, from many different constituencies, and from inside and outside the College. To ensure that the plans once developed are living documents that we use to determine priorities, guide decision making, plan budgets, and assess progress, each has become the responsibility of one of the College’s governing councils.

◆ **Academic Master Plan**

The development of the College’s first Academic Master Plan began in fall 2005 and took approximately eighteen months to complete. The Instructional Affairs Council provides ongoing oversight and recommendations pertaining to the Academic Master Plan, at least in theory. The plan has multiple general goals, including improving student performance by fostering a culture of excellence, emphasizing program and student assessment, focusing our economic development efforts on displaced workers by retraining and educating them to reenter the workforce, pursuing community partnerships, preparing students for successful transfer to four-year institutions, and recognizing and responding to changing community needs. These principles are very closely aligned with the commitments the College has made in order to fulfill its mission.

The progress report from the Academic Affairs Office for the first year of the Academic Master Plan implementation provides evidence that the plan is working and the processes set up to
support the plan are effective. Of sixty-one priorities for the 2007-08 year, forty-three were seen as accomplished and another ten made significant progress. Annual goals are collected from the academic departments.

Examples of the plan’s achievements range from upgrading curriculum in the medical clerk program to creating a physical geography lab. An example of something rarely done at a community college, which probably would not have been done without the impetus of the Academic Master Plan, is the elimination of a program. The Pulp and Paper Science Program was developed many years ago at the request of a local paper company. As the company downsized its operations over several years, and eventually ceased operations in its Muskegon plant, the need and demand for the program disappeared. Rather than keeping it an active program, it was deemed an unnecessary program and was eliminated.

◆ Enrollment Management Plan

The second plan called for by the Strategic Plan was the development of an enrollment management plan. As with the Academic Master Plan, it is the first formal plan of its kind for Muskegon Community College.

Development of the Enrollment Management Plan 2008-2011 required an exploration of all phases of both recruitment and retention. It also connects to commitment nine of the College’s Mission Statement: “The College is committed to providing comprehensive student services that are conducive to student learning and satisfaction in all facets of the college experience and appropriate to an open door community college.”

When the committee finished, the Enrollment Management Plan consisted of seven recruitment goals and seven retention goals. Each goal includes strategies, success indicators, and timelines.

Although the plan is a good tool, the process for monitoring it and achievement of the goals is a bit vague. The plan itself states that “because the Enrollment Management Plan is a dynamic instrument, it will require monitoring by the Enrollment Management Plan Committee. Thus, the Committee will meet periodically over the next three years to modify the plan as needed.” The original committee, of almost fifty people, is probably too large a group to monitor a plan, and during the 2008-09 school year the committee did not meet.

The Enrollment Management Plan is being monitored, though, as portions are reviewed at monthly student services directors meetings. As the plan is relatively new, there has been no comprehensive review of what we’ve done, the results of what we’ve done, what we’re planning to do next, and what we should change. The Student Services Council, one of the College’s governing councils, has been charged with monitoring the plan and altering that Council’s bylaws to include a statement about that responsibility.

◆ Information Technology Plan

The third group that the strategic plan called for was the creation of what turned out to be the Information Technology Strategic Plan 2007-2010. Using the College’s mission and vision statements as inspiration, the group developed guiding principles that included “IT provides comprehensive support to College programs and services to meet the diverse and lifelong educational needs of the College community” and “OIT (Office of Information Technology)
assures quality, continuous improvement, and relevancy through continuous assessment of all IT systems and services.” These principles connect the Office of Information Technology with our primary institutional purpose: student learning.

The resulting plan is laid out as an implementation grid, which includes eight goals, each with key performance indicators, strategies to achieve the goals, responsible parties, dependencies, resources, the fiscal year completion is expected, and the anticipated outcomes. Each goal begins with the phrase “OIT will...” The Office of Information Technology uses the plan to guide efforts in its annual tactical plan and budget planning cycle. Responsibility for oversight of the plan rests with the Information Technology Council of the College, one of the governing councils made up of representatives from across campus, including students. The Strategic Plan Refresh 2009 is an excellent review of what has been accomplished in the plan so far.

Although the College is making planning progress, the Strategic Plan 2006-2011 identifies three additional goals (plans) to be developed: a campus master plan (sometimes called a master facilities plan), an institutional development plan, and a budget plan. A campus master plan is being developed in 2010. In the meantime, facilities work continues to be guided by the previous Campus Master Plan.

Although a written institutional development plan has not been developed, most of the goals related to the plan have been accomplished. Many of the pieces are in place and great strides have been made in cleaning up our alumni and donor mailing lists, installing software to track donations, and obtaining grants. But there has not been a plan, nor institutional guidance provided, to set priorities for grantseeking. The new Office of Community Relations has developed fundraising and related goals.

A formal budget plan has also not been written, but improvements in budgeting are being accomplished. Currently the budget process consists of each department proposing a budget (the expense side) for their area for the next fiscal year. Those proposals are then submitted to the vice presidents of academic affairs, student services, and administrative services who determine the reasonableness of the requests. Conservative projections of enrollment (income) are based on history and knowledge of the current market conditions. Dialogue among the vice presidents and the departments follows, until a final budget is proposed to the Board of Trustees in the spring of each year. The Board either accepts the proposed budget or sends it back for more review. Tuition for the coming academic year is also set at that time.

**Follow-Through on Progress of Plans**

The major plans of the College that have been developed so far are working quite well. The Strategic Plan, the Academic Master Plan, the Enrollment Management Plan, and the Information Technology Strategic Plan drive the planning at all levels of the College.

The Strategic Plan 2006-2011 includes three additional priorities in addition to the number one priority of improving long-range planning:

1. **Enhance outreach programs to establish Muskegon Community College as a center for lifelong learning**
2. **Restructure Student Services**
3. **Promote professional development**
Each priority of the Strategic Plan has general goals broken down into more specific goals. All the goals listed in Priority #2 of the plan, except for one, list “complete a cost/benefit analysis” as a necessary step to achieving the goal. This demonstrates the College’s intent to link planning processes with budgeting processes. How well we are achieving these multiple, college-wide goals found in the plans appears in appropriate sections of this Self-Study Report.

As with many things, follow-through is crucial and is the more challenging phase of planning. Plans require a champion, a person or office, who will see that decisions are made and actions are taken based on forethought rather than individual whims or responses to temporary crises. Follow-through requires that time is set aside on a regular basis to communicate the plan, revisit the goals and strategies, and check progress. This is the challenge for Muskegon Community College as the employees responsible for the end results are sometimes far removed from the committee that developed the plan. As front-line supervisors in Student Services, academic department chairpersons, and the support staff for all are caught up in the daily and weekly demands of the College, it is very easy for the plans to be pushed to the back of the desk.

**Strengths Related to Core Component 2d**

- The College takes seriously the importance of planning
- Planning is tied to the mission, budget, governance and other plans
- Plans are connected to the council governance system for monitoring
- The College invites a wide range of internal and external constituents to assist in creating important planning documents
- Those who create plans consider a wide array of relevant information

**Challenges Related to Core Component 2d**

- Governance councils look at the plan assigned to them but probably not often enough
- It is often not obvious who bears responsibility for implementing and monitoring particular goals created by the plans
- It is not widely understood how the plans are related to each other
CRITERION THREE  ● Student Learning and Effective Teaching

Muskegon Community College provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.
CRITERION THREE • Student Learning and Effective Teaching

Introduction to Criterion Three

Muskegon Community College is committed to student learning and effective teaching, as demonstrated by our examination of the next four core components. First, we will look at our assessment efforts, including how we break down our efforts into five levels and the evaluation methods and tools we use, some more effective than others. We will then look at the people in charge of student learning—the faculty—their qualifications, their control of curriculum, and their efforts to grow professionally. We will examine the wide variety of learning environments, including off-campus opportunities that enhance teaching and, we believe, learning. Finally, in addition to looking at people and places, we will look at the resources provided for quality instruction, including budget support, technical support, and support for students no matter their learning location. We will demonstrate that for the most part, Muskegon Community College meets Criterion Three.

Core Component 3a: The organization’s goals for student learning outcomes are clearly stated for each educational program and make effective assessment possible.

Summary of Core Component 3a
Muskegon Community College’s commitment to student learning is nowhere more evident than in our analysis of Core Component 3a. First, we look at the last visiting team’s required progress report on assessment, which we completed in 2004, and how we found it not punitive but productive. Following an honest evaluation of our culture of assessment, we will look at how we assess learning at five different levels. At level one, we identify three programs—Liberal Arts/Transfer, Occupational, and Learning Skills—and describe our methods of assessing their usefulness. Then we will show the trials we have gone through trying to effectively assess general education, which is level two, and how our efforts outweigh our results. We will also demonstrate how our faculty benefit from discipline reviews, level three, although many instructors are still reluctant to participate. We will also show how course assessment, level four, is a mixture of things we regularly do to evaluate courses and of new, innovative methods. And finally we look at what goes on in the classroom, level five, to assess learning and teaching. We believe our efforts to assess student learning fulfill the intent of Core Component 3a.

◆ The 2004 Progress Report

The ten-year continuing accreditation granted to Muskegon Community College in 2001 came with one caveat: In 2004, the College must submit a progress report on its assessment practices. In March 2004, the College’s assessment coordinator submitted this report, and it was accepted by the Higher Learning Commission in July 2004 with no additional requirements. The report was very useful to us in at least three ways. First, it focused our attention on what we were assessing: We limited our efforts to evaluate only mission statements that directly related to student learning. We were reminded that the only purpose of assessment is to improve student learning.

Second, we defined five levels of assessment we were targeting and who was responsible for each:

- **Program level:** Vice President for Academic Affairs (current language)
- **General education level:** Vice President and the assessment coordinator
- **Discipline level:** Department Chairs and their faculty
- **Course level:** Department Chairs and full-time faculty
- **Classroom level:** All faculty members
Criterion Three  ♦ Student Learning and Effective Teaching

Ultimate responsibility for assessing and improving student learning belongs to the Vice President for Academic Affairs, but assistance at all five levels is provided by the assessment coordinator, a faculty member given released time for these activities.

The third way our 2004 report was helpful is that this narrowing and clarification of what we were to assess, and who would be responsible, helped in making progress toward creating greater faculty buy-in for assessing student learning.

By examining what occurs and what is learned at each of the five levels of assessment and other student success indicators, Muskegon Community College concludes that, although progress is certainly still needed, our goals for student learning outcomes are clearly stated for each educational program and make effective assessment possible.

♦ Culture of Assessment

Although the College may be more accurately described as having a culture of acceptance than a culture of assessment, both understanding of and participation in assessment have improved. Many administrators and faculty have taken ownership of efforts to evaluate and improve student learning in their area of responsibility. The number of faculty using classroom assessment techniques, for example, is quite high; most chairpersons have pushed for completion of discipline-level reviews (with mixed success); and departments have created individualized student surveys that focus on what students have learned for all major courses.

The administration has both modeled and encouraged assessment efforts. Since the last team visit, the College has had four presidents, and each has been well-informed of assessment efforts and has offered continual budget support. In addition, the Vice President for Academic Affairs has made assessment of student learning a priority for her office and also oversees the Academic Master Plan. This document, updated yearly, is organized around the five levels of assessment but unites all areas of the College in assessing and improving student learning. This plan is the College’s best example of showing how assessment at all levels (from classroom to institution) is unified in a common goal to achieve the College’s mission.

Much effort is made to inform the entire campus about assessment. The current assessment coordinator has held this position for fifteen years, and he is a constant reminder that the College’s commitment to assessing student learning will not go away. In addition to serving as the chair of the assessment committee, the assessment coordinator prepares a brief assessment report card every year with goals to improve teaching and learning. This communication is presented to the department chairs and distributed to all faculty. As a standing committee of the College’s Instructional Affairs Council, the assessment committee annually reports on assessment and periodically provides updates. Additional assessment information is distributed through email, the “Campus Connections” newsletter, Faculty Seminar Days (in-services preceding the fall and winter semesters), and reports from department representatives on the assessment committee.

Despite these efforts, communication remains a problem. For example, members of the Board of Trustees likely are not very knowledgeable about assessment, probably less the Board’s fault and more the fault of the College for not keeping them sufficiently informed. In addition, communicating with liberal arts faculty has been a challenge, not because the faculty is particularly disagreeable, but because instructors fiercely defend the College’s identity as mainly preparing students to transfer. There is a conviction that some kinds of academic skills cannot be measured, so some faculty members are (if not hostile) at least hesitant toward any initiative they
interpret as being a threat to academic freedom. Getting instructors to see their stake in assessment efforts as ownership rather than compliance has been and remains a challenge.

Results-sharing internally has not been very successful. For example, results of the standardized general education tests Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress have rarely been shared. Results of student learning surveys, classroom assessment technique reports, liberal arts discipline reviews, and self-study evaluations of occupational programs are fed back to the individual faculty members involved, but do not necessarily add to a college-wide culture of assessment. Students are being assessed but in almost all cases, they do not see the results. Transparency for parties outside of the College community is also lacking; however, the College is taking its assessment results online as one way of fulfilling the self-study goal of improving internal and external communication.

Although accountability to external constituencies should integrate with assessment at the College, it often does not. The College collects and reports data about its students (program completion, fall-to-fall retention, etc.) as mandated by the state and federal government. How we can use all of this information is not completely determined.

A move in the right direction is that the College is now a member of the National Student Clearinghouse, which helps us identify where students transfer after they leave the College. This new tool resulted in the 2009 Former Student Survey. Coordination between the institutional researcher, information technology, and the records office is starting to mean access to other pieces, including students’ majors, grade point averages, and graduation, allowing comparisons of our students with their four-year college counterparts.

Implementation of a system to track students’ goals will also improve our ability to assess whether students have achieved their goals at the College; and if the goal was to transfer, if that goal was achieved. Faculty and administrators do not often use data to determine internal assessment goals. Not many (if any) requests are made in-house to see or use these data for the purpose of assessing student learning. According to the institutional researcher, it has been difficult to combine or compare data from the College’s old home-grown system with data from the new Datatel system; however, the new technology looks promising for current and future data collection, comparison, and reporting.

We are getting better at involving faculty members in assessment, and having them see there are even benefits in participating; however, our assessment activities and results are not adequately presented to students, the general public, and external agencies.

◆ Assessment of the Five Levels

Assessment Level 1: Program

The College uses a variety of assessments for its three broadest purposes, what we call “programs”: Liberal Arts/Transfer, Occupational, and Learning Skills. Courses that earn regular credits almost always fall under one of these categories.

Liberal Arts/Transfer Program

One important way we assess is to continually check our progress toward established goals. In 2000, the NCA team reviewing the College’s self-study was concerned that there was no formal
process established to regularly review the Liberal Arts/Transfer Program. In its required 2004 assessment progress report, the College announced that a plan had been established. The plan was that the Dean of Instruction (now the Vice President for Academic Affairs) would be responsible for evaluating the Liberal Arts/Transfer Program every four years according to criteria in four areas: curriculum, student performance, faculty, and extra-curricular opportunities. The initial evaluation, planned for the 2004-2005 school year, was intended to establish benchmarks to be used in subsequent yearly updates. Then in response to each update, the Vice President for Academic Affairs would highlight one main area to be the focus of improvements for the coming year.

Following the guidelines outlined by the assessment committee, the Academic Affairs office consulted with students, instructors, administrators, and outside evaluators as it researched what would become the “Liberal Arts/Transfer Program Review,” which was published in fall 2005. As the introduction to the document explains, “The purposes of the review were to document the existence of the support services available to students, investigate the quality of the transfer programming we offer, and determine if and where there are improvements to be made in what we do.” The review adhered to the plan outlined in the 2004 progress report with one exception: An additional focus, financial considerations, was added to the four areas already highlighted for evaluation.

The “Liberal Arts/Transfer Program Review” arrived at fourteen recommendations, seven of them focusing mainly on measuring and improving student learning. The Vice President for Academic Affairs reports that as of fall 2009, five of these seven recommendations have enjoyed respectable progress:

1. Steady but plodding progress toward completion of discipline reviews (described later in this section)
2. A tentative plan for future use of the Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress
general education test
3. Development of information literacy standards and efforts to equip students with these
   skills
4. Improved ability to track student success through membership in the National Student
   Clearinghouse
5. Completion of the data collection portion of the College’s student goal-tracking system

Two of the seven goals have been worked on but are perhaps too broadly stated or do not include exactly who is in charge for guiding the recommendation:

1. Academic Affairs office will work with the Office of Institutional Research to identify
   areas for improvement of student success
2. Liberal Arts/Transfer Program will work with the Learning Skills Program to monitor
   student success after completion of learning skills courses

Although the Academic Affairs office must choose a manageable number of recommendations to focus on each year while leaving others for future initiatives, measuring and improving student performance has been and remains a primary focus within the Liberal Arts/Transfer Program.

In addition to the recommendations focusing on student academic achievement, the “Liberal Arts/Transfer Program Review” included seven more recommendations. Two are related to curriculum and are being accomplished:
Three recommendations for the Liberal Arts Program involved faculty development:

1. Consistently hire qualified instructors
2. Increase the number of classes using course evaluations
3. Increase professional development opportunities

All three of these recommendations have been pursued in earnest by the Vice President for Academic Affairs, the assessment committee, and the Center for Teaching and Learning. Finally, there were two recommendations for extra-curricular opportunities

1. To continue offering “real college” opportunities
2. To build the Honors Program

Both recommendations have been actively pursued by the Student Life Office, Academic Affairs, and the honors coordinator. The continued progress toward so many of these recommendations and the broad participation from areas and individuals delegated by the Vice President for Academic Affairs show that the College takes seriously the goals it sets for its academic programs and takes practical steps to achieve them.

During the 2006-2007 school year, work began on the Academic Master Plan (AMP), a comprehensive evaluation of academics at all levels. Rather than duplicating efforts by conducting yearly updates of the “Liberal Arts/Transfer Program Review” in parallel with the AMP, the Academic Affairs Office determined that it would be more efficient for review of the Liberal Arts/Transfer Program to take place within the AMP. The recommendations outlined by the “Liberal Arts/ Transfer Program Review” were adopted into the AMP and have been updated by the Academic Affairs Office yearly since then.

Merging the liberal arts/transfer review process into the Academic Master Plan is not only efficient but helps communication in two ways: The annual review and goal setting involves many offices, committees, and academic departments related to the Liberal Arts/Transfer Program, and it serves as a focus of conversation between the Board of Trustees and the Academic Affairs Office when the Vice President presents an annual update to the Board.

Because the AMP is a changing document, the goals and recommendations made for the Liberal Arts/Transfer Program are updated and changed each year. By establishing annual multiple goals, it is a challenge to not become bewildered and unfocused. One main reason the College applied to be an Achieving the Dream participant is to get help on narrowing the number of goals and establishing a more simple description of things we need to do.

Perhaps because the College has been so prolific lately in producing goals for the institution, some of the more traditional ways of evaluating a liberal arts transfer program are not being strongly pursued. For example, we continue to have a decades-long problem of finding out how well our transfer students are doing; for example, their grade point average compared with native students.
We took a giant step forward by joining the National Student Clearinghouse, enabling us to identify former students and contact many of them via a survey. We found many enlightening things; for example, they had two main purposes for attending Muskegon Community College: earn an associate’s degree for transfer (13.8%) and take classes for transfer (82.5%). Although one measure of our success is the number of students who earn degrees from the College, we must not assume that degree attainment is the primary goal for many students while they attend the College. Of those students who responded to the survey, 97.5% said they achieved their goal.

In addition, 91.3% felt their credits from the College were treated fairly. Sixty-seven percent said their grade point average was the same as at the College or higher, and 59.3% said if they could start college all over again, they would begin at Muskegon Community College. These figures give some indication that our former students were satisfied and felt successfully prepared at the College.

**Occupational Programs**

Much of the evidence of student learning in our occupational program is the result of external evaluation of student learning outcomes. Evaluations are objective and measure whether our students are achieving clear standards. For example, the results of licensing exams for both nursing and respiratory therapy students are outstanding.

Nursing graduates consistently exceed state and national pass rates on national RN and LPN licensing examinations (NCLEX-RN and NCLEX-PN). Between July 2008 and June 2009, the College’s nursing students outperformed their counterparts on the NCLEX exams not only across the state, but across the nation. On NCLEX-RN, 87.42% passed nationally and 88.20% passed statewide on their first attempt, while 95.65% of the Muskegon Community College nursing graduates passed NCLEX–RN on their first attempt. One hundred percent of the College’s students passed the NCLEX-PN exam on their first attempt. The Nursing Program director reports these pass rates to the College community regularly and posts these outcomes publicly on the College’s Nursing Web site.

The Muskegon Community College Nursing Program has been approved by the Michigan Board of Nursing since 1983 and earned initial accreditation from the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission, Inc. (NLNAC) in 2005-2006. Program outcomes are established and evaluated for NCLEX pass rates, graduation rates, job placement and employer and student satisfaction. Eighty percent of students admitted to the Nursing Program complete the Associate Degree level in 150% of stated program length as defined by NLNAC Standards. Graduate surveys historically indicate that 100% of responding nursing graduates are working full- or part-time in a nursing position nine months after graduation, although the 2009 economic downturn has slowed new graduate nurse hiring in the past year in West Michigan. Annual surveys indicate that nursing graduates believe the Muskegon Community College Nursing Program has prepared them for their first nursing position and for the National Council Licensing Examination (NCLEX).

Respiratory Therapy is also a model of assessment and is accredited by the Committee on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (www.caahep.org) and through the Committee on Accreditation for Respiratory Care, or CoARC (www.coarc.org).

Graduates are evaluated both directly through national credentialing exams and indirectly through employer surveys, and these evaluations lead to change in the delivery of course content.
Core Component 3a

The results of these assessments inform an annual review, which is written by the department chair. This formal review most recently found that Respiratory Therapy students lacked confidence and were not sufficiently prepared for the challenges they would face in the field. In response, the RT program began to use both written exams (retired national credentialing exams) and oral exams (in which faculty tested second-year students and second-year students tested first-year students) at the end of each year. The result has been positive.

Anecdotally, RT instructors have determined that students have more confidence as they near completion of the program. The department chair also reports that graduates are entering the credentialing process earlier since adopting these year-end practice assessments. Graduate performance on the national credentialing exams has continually been excellent with a 100% pass rate on the Certified Respiratory Therapist exam seven years in a row (2002-2008), an average pass rate of 95.55% on the Comprehensive Clinical Simulating Self Assessment exam (2002-2007), and an average pass rate of 98.03% on the Written Registered Respiratory Therapist exam (2002-2007).

Finally, employer surveys indicate a high overall satisfaction rate with the College’s RT graduates; the more recent survey reports an average satisfaction rating of 4.38 (out of five), with no employers rating a Muskegon Community College graduate with a score less than four.

Potentially useful evidence of student learning also comes from required reports for government agencies. The college receives funding every year for certain occupational programs under the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act. To remain in compliance with Perkins requirements, the College must report on the following “core indicators” for students in occupational programs: 1) technical skill attainment; 2) credential, certificate, or diploma earned; 3) retention and transfer; 4) job placement; 5) nontraditional student participation; and 6) completion. The College’s latest report showed the completion rate of the College’s students was twice the state’s goal, and the retention/transfer rate was also well above the state-established goal.

We do not, as noted earlier, publish our job placement rate. Although at 92% it seems quite praiseworthy, the calculation is based only upon those students who respond to a survey. With such incomplete information, we have decided for ethical reasons to not advertise employment rates that we cannot better substantiate.

At the individual program level, however, we are sometimes able to get better placement information. The Commercial Drivers License program, for example, shows nearly 100% of its participants pass the license exam and approximately 85% find employment in the trucking industry. The Commercial Driver’s License program is evaluated closely because it has received three grants from the U.S. Department of Transportation that require reports.

Other occupational programs come under close scrutiny on a schedule set by the State of Michigan. Each occupational program is evaluated approximately every three years, using both qualitative and quantitative information. The Self-Study Evaluation of Occupational Programs process examines the five Perkins core indicators at the program level (what we call disciplines) to see how individual programs are faring compared to others on campus.

In addition to retention, graduation, and job placement data, surveys are given to students, faculty, and advisory committee members within each program. The surveys ask a variety of questions about the quality of the instructors, the facilities, the job placement services, and so forth. After the surveys are returned and processed, the Vice President for Academic Affairs meets with the faculty
program head and the institutional researcher to review all the data and develop a plan for program improvement. Historically, these reports were filed away and forgotten until the next evaluation cycle. More recently, however, the occupational programs are making a concerted effort to use the results of the surveys to set priorities for equipment purchases and to make improvements to curriculum.

Learning Skills Program

The Learning Skills Program is loosely defined as the courses and services that help students develop abilities that may not be intrinsically valuable, but are instrumentally valuable in enabling students to achieve their goals in either the liberal arts or occupational classes. The College Success Center is the physical home of the Learning Skills Program (although the Math and English departments also offer some basic skills courses). The Center has the following mission statement:

The College Success Center is committed to helping underprepared college students and those seeking enrichment acquire the skills necessary to be successful in their endeavors at MCC and, subsequently, in the community.

The Learning Skills Program has made progress on few but significant Academic Master Plan goals. The most visible improvement to the Learning Skills Program is its new home in the expanded College Success Center (CSC). A friendly, organized hub of students studying and instructors working one-on-one with students has replaced a dark and confusing floor plan. The Tutoring Center has expanded its space as well, both on campus, by moving out of the CSC, and online with 24-hour online tutoring help.

Other assessments and improvements also took place. In response to a study of student success in 15-week versus 7.5-week classes, the CSC determined that students performed better in the more intense, short terms and in response changed the course offering to include more 7.5-week classes.

The Learning Skills Program excels in tracking individual student success in the classroom and in tailoring course content to students’ individual needs. The CSC also keeps grade statistics for all classes in order to see trends in student learning. Students in the math, English, and reading courses offered in the CSC are given pre- and post-tests, and instructors keep track of improvement. This close monitoring leads to changes in instruction. For example, a study of whether our basic math courses prepared students for college algebra found that students struggled a lot with the transition. This led to the creation of a course, Math 038, to bridge that gap. The course is new and its impact is yet to be determined.

However, although we can document that learning occurs in the College Success Center, we have very limited evidence that this learning prepares students to be successful in our general curriculum. While its strength is in one-on-one attention, the CSC also conducts some collective assessments. Some efforts have been made to determine whether students placed in remedial courses succeed in subsequent college-level classes; however, these efforts have been sporadic, and it is unclear whose responsibility it is to track this information.

Most students come to the College Success Center because the College vigorously requires both mandatory testing and mandatory placement. The College is successful in using the COMPASS test to determine students’ readiness for college-level reading, writing, and math. Students who achieve proficiency on state-mandated high school writing and reading tests (Michigan Merit
Exam, or MME), or who have an ACT composite score of 22 or higher, are exempt from taking the reading and writing placement assessment; however, everyone must take a math placement assessment.

Our placement policies seem to help student learning. An analysis by the institutional research office looks at new students admitted to the College in the fall semester of 2007 and compares those who tested into the lowest level of English with those who tested the highest (there are four possible placement levels). There are some interesting results (fall 2008 data are similar):

• The low group was as likely to actually register as the high group (59% and 60%).
• Once enrolled, both groups had similar success rates, defined as completing their course with a C or better grade (86% and 89%).
• However, the successful groups differ in whether or not they enrolled the next semester in the next higher level English course (36% and 67%).
• The lowest scoring students who did enroll in the next level of English were again as successful as those in the highest group (84% and 82%).
• Finally, those students in the low group who waited a semester before enrolling in their required course were not as likely to succeed as the high group (17% and 76%).

It appears that students with low test scores can succeed in their first required English course and then also succeed at the next level. Unfortunately, large numbers do not re-enroll for reasons we do not know. Math and reading success rates also need similar analysis.

To help students reach their goals, all general education courses for the Associate in Science and Arts degree have a “Ready to Succeed” requirement. Students must demonstrate by one of the three testing options (COMPASS, ACT, or the MME) an appropriate reading level to enroll in general education courses. Two exceptions are that studio art courses are exempt, and students with a 2.0 grade point average and fifteen earned credits are also exempt. Students who complete any reading course with a grade of C or better are declared ready to succeed so that no student needs to take remediation over and over. It is obvious that if students don’t pass our general education courses, they will not achieve the goals of our degree requirements. The wisdom of this policy to help students is based on research studies:

• Research over a decade ago done by our assessment coordinator (completed before making the ready to succeed policy mandatory) consistently showed that students who met the ready reading level were almost twice as likely as those who did not meet the ready level to pass a general education course, whether it was chemistry or political science. Unfortunately, this study cannot be fully duplicated since virtually all students currently enrolled in general education courses have met the “ready to succeed” policy; there are not two groups available to compare.

• Results from five years of testing using the MAPP test of general education also indicate that the readiness policy probably helps students. Scores in the test’s subject areas of humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences strongly correlate with scores on the reading section.

• Results of our most recent “General Education Survey,” given to all who earn the Associate in Science and Arts degree, also suggest the readiness policy positively affects
students. Students felt they had made significant progress in developing their skills—for example, their ability to write research papers. When entering the College, 15% thought they had excellent research writing skills; now when graduating, 61% say their skills are excellent, and the remaining 39% claimed their skills are good.

Another reason our mandatory policies help students be successful is that since the COMPASS tests are scored immediately, students can apply, take tests, see a counselor, and register for classes, all in a one-stop visit to the College.

There are other potential benefits from our mandatory testing and placement policies. The College’s 2007 move to an electronic placement test, COMPASS, potentially improved the College’s ability to measure and track student success based on placement, but this hasn’t yet happened. Depending on who the chairs of the Math and English departments are in any given semester or year (the position is rotating), data are generated to show how well students succeed in college-level Math and English classes. However, there is no formal schedule for generating this information and no specific plan for using it to improve student learning.

The College is very committed to the Learning Skills Program, and conducts multiple assessments; however, we have insufficient evidence to demonstrate many students can take the next step of being successful in college-level courses.

Assessment Level 2: General Education
The College’s goals for student learning at the general education level are clearly stated, making effective assessment at least possible. Two documents in our catalog describe in some detail the knowledge and skills that we want our students to acquire as a result of finishing our general education degree requirements: “The Purposes of General Education” statement for the Associate in Science and Arts degree and “The Purposes of General Education” statement for the Associate in Applied Science degree.

In 2001, the NCA evaluation team listed the following challenge in its report: “The College has not agreed on an overriding set of general education or basic core competencies which should be acquired by every educated person in the course of his or her education…” Although we take this challenge seriously, it is the College’s position that two different sets of general education learning outcomes for our two degrees are appropriate given the differences in the purposes and benefits the degrees offer. A careful reading of the two purpose statements does reveal much overlap; all five of the Applied Science degree purposes are also found in the Science and Arts degree’s purposes. The College believes it is responsible for determining our curriculum and has done so.

Given these two different sets of general education requirements, it is not surprising that different methods are used to assess learning. Occupational general education is done primarily by consulting experts—externally by advisory committees and internally by faculty. Associate in Applied Science degree requirements include “required related” courses, which essentially mean more general education. These courses are constantly evaluated to see if they meet the needs of the disciplines. Although curriculum is constantly evaluated, and assessing students takes place almost every day in almost every classroom, there is no systematic method of measuring learning in general education courses for the Associate in Applied Science degree.

On the other hand, assessment of the general education requirements for the Associate in Science and Arts degree enjoys the most potential while experiencing the greatest challenges. Our methods
include two direct measures of student learning: mandatory placement tests and the MAPP/Academic Profile test (although this has not been administered for four years). There are also two indirect measures: the annual general education survey and the liberal arts discipline reviews. The most useful, potentially, are the MAPP test and the general education survey.

In the mid-’90s, the College adopted new general education requirements for the ASA degree. Some requirements remained; for example, English Composition 101 and 102, and two science courses. Some requirements were new; for example, requiring a philosophy class, or for the first time ever, a mandatory math course. Our aim was to require students to complete courses where they would most likely accrue the skills and knowledge described in the purpose statement. We had many hours of thoughtful deliberation, and we created a rubric connecting the purpose statement to actual course requirements. The new requirements were put into effect for the freshman class of 1996, and they remain our current requirements.

An analysis of graduates shows there was a big shift in the types of courses graduates completed from 1990-1993, under decades-old requirements, and what they completed from 2003-2006, under the new requirements. Our logic and ethics requirement, for example, resulted in a boost in philosophy enrollment from 47% of all graduates to 87%. Of the 1990-1993 graduates, 60% took a <100 level math class (there was no math requirement then) compared to 74% of the 2003-2006 graduates. We added an international human cultures requirement; as a result, the cultural anthropology course saw enrollment go from 7% to 42%. After eliminating a physical education age exemption, enrollment went from 72% to 94%. Where there was no change in graduation requirements, such as retaining two semesters of composition, there was no change in completion rates. These changes and others suggest our general education goals were more likely to be achieved because students had to take courses under certain categories which were connected to our purpose statement. No doubt putting students into a class does not guarantee learning will take place, but the probability is certainly increased.

In addition to looking at enrollments in certain courses that we thought best for students, we have also annually since 1996 surveyed Associate in Science and Arts graduates about our general education requirements. The survey asks students to respond to two statements: first, tell us what knowledge you have of each subject (all found in the purpose statement), and tell us how much of your knowledge was taught to you in your required general education classes. Over the years the response rate to the survey has averaged around 40%.

With the hiring of an institutional researcher, the College finally began to analyze the results of this general education survey and it appears that the changes in graduation requirements adopted in 1996 have had some benefit to student learning. We selected two groups to compare: First, students who had graduated during the years 1995-1998 (virtually all of these students graduated under the requirements found in the College’s catalog prior to 1996). The second group of students graduated between 2003 and 2006 under our current general education requirements. For ease of understanding, statements about the first group will be called “old” and statements about the second group will be called “new.”

Some of the differences between the two groups seem to indicate that our new requirements made a positive change in what students know. For example, we added a math requirement to our general education requirements, and the new students ranked their math skills significantly higher than the old students did; in addition, the new students gave significantly more credit to their classroom experiences for improving their skills. Importantly, however, even when old and new
students ranked their skills or knowledge similarly in areas such as an international class, the new students more often attributed their knowledge to what they were taught in the classroom.

Unfortunately, curriculum changes made to increase knowledge in a particular content area have not always succeeded. For example, requiring students to complete a philosophy course for graduation did not appear to students to have improved their logic skills. Despite the mixed evaluations given by students, we will continue to administer the survey to graduates. We need to improve our communication with faculty and other staff regarding survey results. Few people know about students’ perceptions of our general education requirements.

In addition to student course selection and survey analysis, in 2000 the College decided to add an objective measure of students’ achievement in general education. We chose the Academic Profile (later called MAPP) test by Educational Testing Service, mainly because this test measured both skills and content knowledge, as does our purpose statement for general education. We committed to testing for five years, and we tested 500 to 800 students at a time in 2000, 2001, 2002, 2004 and 2006. The College had technological difficulties in retrieving and comparing test data, problems which were ameliorated in 2006 when ETS offered the raw data results in a much more usable format. All numbers cited in this section are from the 2006 testing year when 521 (over 10% of our student population) took the test.

More important than technical issues, we have had frustration in making use of results to improve student learning. However, test results from MAPP are of value in demonstrating that some changes we made in graduation requirements (still our current requirements) were good ones. First, in general, students who had completed our general education requirements achieved a significantly higher total scaled score (447) on this test of general education, than students who had not completed any of our requirements (437). The total scaled score ranges from 400 to 500. Scores demonstrate that it doesn’t matter if students are full-time or part-time, old or young, male or female, or a host of other factors. The number of general education courses completed, however, is a significant factor.

Students who take our required general education classes will score higher on the MAPP test of general education, as evidenced by two areas where we require more than one course: English and the natural sciences. What follows shows a strong correlation between taking certain required classes and the total scaled score on MAPP:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English courses:</th>
<th>Total Scaled Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No English completed</td>
<td>433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One English course completed</td>
<td>437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two English courses completed</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Natural science courses:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No science completed</td>
<td>435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One science course completed</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two science courses completed</td>
<td>445</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The point is simple: The more required general education courses our students complete, the better their scores on a respected test of general education.

We made another change in our general education requirements several years ago by adding Math 050, Intermediate Algebra, as a graduation requirement (previously, no math was required). MAPP
test results show that the more math classes a student completes, the higher the math skills and the total scaled score will be:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Math Completed</th>
<th>Math skills score (100-130)</th>
<th>Total scaled score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No math</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math 040</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math 050</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>441</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It appears the best way to assure that students graduate with fundamental math skills is to require an appropriate course.

We are accountable for demonstrating that our students are achieving the goals of general education that we have chosen, and our MAPP test results help show we are accomplishing several of our aims. Although we have this benefit, we have little else to show for our testing efforts. More important, results have not been used to make changes that would improve student learning.

This limited track record may be about to change. About a year into our self-study our Board created a new purpose to be a part of the MCC Mission Statement. It says that “MCC is committed to…prepare students in critical thinking, communication and long-term learning skills for the changing challenges of the future.” The key words here are “critical thinking.” The assessment committee almost immediately examined this statement and agreed that the six general abilities in our purpose statement for the ASA degree constitute our definition of critical thinking. What the Board said in a general way, we had already defined in fairly specific terms. So we face a challenge: How can instructors in general education be more effective in teaching critical thinking? How do we measure whether or not students are learning these skills?

To find answers, we chose one of the six general abilities to work on each year for the next six years, beginning with critical reading. We chose this ability for two reasons: In the 2009 survey of full-time faculty members, critical reading is identified as the skill they are least likely to develop in their classes; and scores from the 2006 MAPP test results indicate that critical reading is our students’ weakest basic skill.

Our plan is that from 2010-2011, we intend to offer seminars, workshops, conference attendance and so forth for general education instructors who volunteer to develop their critical reading teaching skills.

Trained instructors may administer a pre-test for fall 2010 in classes that will be revised to do more development of critical reading skills. A post-test will be given at the end of the term. MAPP may be the test since it has a critical thinking component, and we have previous data that might be useful.

This plan from the assessment committee, unfortunately, is already behind schedule. But the College is still committed to an excellent general education program. Assessing how well students achieve the learning goals we have for them continues to be a challenge we will not ignore.

The “Purposes of General Education” for the ASA degree document has fostered change. Students today take more courses that are directly related to our learning goals than they did in the past. They often give credit to these courses for significant growth in their knowledge and skills. Finally, having the six general abilities as our overall goal made it easy to incorporate the Board’s
statement about critical thinking and life-long learning, which in turn helped us see a clear purpose for continuing with the MAPP test.

Assessment Level 3: Discipline
Although a solid structure is in place for assessment of student learning at level three, discipline level, progress has been mixed. We define a discipline as a group of courses related to a recognized field of study, often sharing a common catalog prefix. Examples include: anthropology, welding, mathematics, electronics, biology, geography, art, nursing, philosophy, literature, and so forth. Each of our three programs participates in discipline reviews. As part of the College’s developing culture of assessment, evaluations are written by faculty members responsible for teaching courses in the discipline being assessed. The primary purpose of this process is to establish achievable goals for improving curriculum and instruction. Although improving teaching and learning is a priority for the faculty, writing reports is not always perceived in the same light, so progress on completion of these discipline evaluations has been slow, especially in the Liberal Arts/Transfer Program.

Liberal Arts Discipline Reviews
In the Liberal Arts/Transfer Program, faculty conduct their own self studies and are required to get input in their analysis from four sources: students, colleagues in different departments, the administration, and peers from other colleges. Reviews began with the academic year 2003-2004. Our aim was to complete all disciplines in four years, but that has not happened. We identified thirty disciplines and as of winter 2010, sixteen reviews have been completed, eleven have started but not finished, and three have not started. These reviews rely on several indirect measures of assessment, including student surveys, evaluations of syllabi and teaching portfolios conducted by instructors in other disciplines at the College, and evaluations of the same course materials by visiting evaluators within the discipline from other colleges or universities.

The directions given in the “Guidelines for Reviewing Liberal Arts Disciplines” are specific enough to ensure effective assessments, but also encourage instructors in the discipline to openly discuss and evaluate teaching and learning in their courses. A discipline review contains such things as an evaluation of the strengths of the faculty, instructional materials and curriculum; an evaluation of the challenges to achieving or maintaining effective instruction in the discipline; an evaluation of how well and in what ways the courses within this discipline contribute to students achieving any of the six general abilities of the ASA degree purpose statement; a list of achievable goals to maintain strengths and improve weaknesses in this discipline; and supporting documents (results of surveys, statistical analyses, or written evaluations of peers) obtained during the review.

Because the College responds to goals set in discipline reviews, these reviews also strengthen a culture of assessment in the departments that produce them. When conducted, submitted, and shared with faculty teaching in the discipline, reviews are agents of change. For example, in response to their 2005-2006 discipline review, the French faculty adopted multimedia classroom materials and changed textbooks, which, according to their 2008 discipline progress report, has been more in line with area colleges’ French courses. In the Life Science discipline’s 2006 progress report of their 2003-2004 discipline review is evidence of improved instruction and learning; although they did not meet all of their goals for improvements to facilities and equipment, they did make significant improvements to assessment techniques, developmental offerings, and hands-on instruction. Whether or not the goals established in the reviews truly lead to improved teaching and learning, usually there is little more than anecdotal evidence; however, the anecdotes come from well-qualified faculty giving reasoned conclusions.
After receiving a review, the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the assessment coordinator initiate a discussion with faculty who wrote the review. These are very positive discussions but there is no systematic record of these talks. Despite the fact that many authors express satisfaction in completing the process, this attitude does not seem to be enough to persuade other discipline reviews to take place. Progress on the discipline reviews has been slow.

**Self-Study Evaluations of Occupational Programs (SSEOPs)**

Perhaps because they are often tied to funding, discipline-level assessments in the Occupational Program occur more regularly. Required by the State of Michigan, regular evaluation of occupational disciplines helps planning and operating better programs, and prioritizing grant expenditures such as Perkins. These assessments also could provide information to the general public on the status and operations of occupational education programs. Evaluations are completed on a cycle set by the Michigan Department of Energy, Labor, and Economic Growth. Disciplines evaluated by Muskegon Community College include Nursing and Respiratory Therapy; disciplines in Business, including Accounting, Office Systems Education, Marketing, and Management; Computer Information Systems; Criminal Justice; Education; and disciplines in Industrial Technology and Manufacturing, including Automotive Technology, Computer Aided Drafting and Design, Electricity and Electronics, Graphic Design, Machining, Materials, and Welding.

SSEOPs are valuable to the College for several reasons. First, they allow the College to measure the usefulness of its occupational disciplines based on student input. Second, the College uses the information to make changes in disciplines in the following ways: changing curriculum requirements, adjusting objectives, changing patterns of course scheduling, making facility changes, and ensuring that we are meeting other accreditation bodies’ requirements. Third, the SSEOPs are one piece of a much larger goal-setting process at the College. Within each discipline, the College looks at its strengths and weaknesses in order to formulate a plan of action. The intention is to look at models in the market and industry, as well as trends in employment so that the programs can change and grow. Finally, the SSEOPs provide evidence to the State of Michigan as well as prospective employers that students in occupational programs attain the knowledge and skills described in the programs’ objectives.

**Assessment Level 4: Course**

Many positive things are happening in course-level assessments. The College does not require one way of assessment for all courses, such as mandatory rubrics, and this allows for more innovation by faculty. For example, the Industrial Manufacturing Department developed an authentic assessment in advanced courses by requiring students to create an object (for example, a weld, a CAD drawing, a graphic design, or a machined part) that meets certain quality standards determined by faculty, professional associations, and industry advisory teams. These objects are recorded along with the course instructor explaining how the student-created object is assessed. Another use of video recording, this time for formative assessment, is found in physical activity courses: Students in courses like archery, bowling, volleyball, tennis, golf and so forth are recorded, some more than once. The student, along with the instructor, reviews the video, and the student uses the knowledge to advance his or her skills by knowing where to focus time and energy.

Instructors also engage in assessment at the course level by first developing common course objectives. Chairpersons from eleven out of twelve academic departments (and 81.9% of
instructors) report that courses in their department are required to have shared (as opposed to instructor-specific) course objectives. According to the 2009 Faculty Survey, the process for defining, reviewing, and revising shared learning objectives is very hands-on: 66.4% reported that faculty members played a substantial role in developing the objectives and that faculty input was welcomed, while only 5.3% reported that faculty played a limited role because the department chair or a select committee determined the shared objectives. Because of licensing and certification requirements, 8.0% reported that courses (including courses in Nursing, Education, and Criminal Justice, as well as specialized training through the Lakeshore Business and Industrial Training Center) include objectives that are determined or at least influenced by outside parties. Although these numbers suggest that faculty members are involved in the development of course objectives or at least understand where the objectives come from, it is significant to note that a fairly large percentage (20.3%) of instructors reported that they did not know how their course objectives were developed.

Many departments ensure that students learn the most important objectives for their courses by embedding these objectives in required classes. For example, to meet one of our general education requirements, students must take one of five core physical education classes. No matter which activity they choose, the same learning objectives about healthy living are included, and certain questions on the final exam are shared.

The Biology Department has identified key scientific literacy concepts and charted where these learning objectives are found in each course, and the specific learning activities that teach these core objectives. For example, “constructing and reflecting on scientific knowledge” requires that students ask questions that can be investigated empirically. Depending on the course, a variety of student assessment tools are used, such as case studies, experiments, and writing of laboratory reports. Biology instructors are also working on a common final exam for each course for all instructors.

Similarly, the Computer Information Systems faculty have agreed on a set of competencies for basic computer information science courses. All instructors (full-time and adjunct) are asked to incorporate these competencies in their classes. These competencies are also published on the College’s Web site and form the basis for competency tests students can take as an alternative to taking the related class.

The Industrial Manufacturing Department requires, in almost all disciplines, a course called Basic Machining. Faculty from other disciplines (automotive, welding, and so forth) examine and often change the objectives for this course to ensure the objectives are useful for students in disciplines other than machining.

Another recent innovation is that the College made a significant improvement in the way it asks students to evaluate their courses. We moved from a generic student survey that asked little more than whether or not students liked their instructors to an electronic student survey that allows departments to tailor questions to specific courses. This new survey asks students about their readiness for the course, the effort they put into the class, the effectiveness of teaching methods and materials, and the degree to which they feel they have met the course objectives. This information is useful for individual instructors. Our faculty survey shows that 99% of our full-time teachers and 90% of our adjuncts say they have made changes to their teaching as a result of the students’ responses.

Results of the surveys are included in liberal arts discipline reviews, and (at the classroom level)
individual instructors read their evaluations and department chairs often use the student surveys to evaluate new hires and part-time instructors; however, there is no institutionalized push to use the results for the purpose of improving courses. As a result, the format of the survey has been recently revised to make data more searchable. One fortunate side benefit of the surveys is that faculty were required to agree to a common set of course objectives since all teachers of the same course must use the same survey. Common course objectives are increasing in number.

Finally, an area of assessment in which the College continues to improve is the combination of methods to ensure that students in online courses are as successful as students in on-campus classes. First, we ensure that the courses themselves are equivalent, and this begins before the courses are even developed. Would-be instructors of online courses are given a detailed rubric to guide them in developing an online course that matches or exceeds the quality of the on-campus version of the course. Once the instructor’s course is 25% developed, an evaluation team of four veteran online instructors, the distance education coordinator, and the instructor developing the class (in a self-evaluation) use the same rubric to evaluate the online course. The rubric ensures that online courses are high-quality learning environments, and its scoring motivates instructors to continue using it as a guide and a method of measuring improvements to their online courses.

Once the classes are under way, student evaluations, developed by the distance education coordinator, are administered mid-semester in order for instructors to have time to make meaningful changes to the courses as a result of the survey feedback.

The distance education coordinator’s current priorities are to request data from the Office of Institutional Research comparing students who completed online and hybrid courses with students who completed identical on-campus courses, to track online dropouts and stop-outs to learn why they did not complete their on-campus classes, and to compare the grades of online students to the grades of on-campus students in courses taught by the same instructor.

In addition to assessment efforts initiated by the distance education coordinator, individual instructors have done their own comparisons between their online and on-campus classes. For example, the Math Department compared test results between online, hybrid, and on-campus classes in fall 2008; they found that online and hybrid students not only performed as well as their on-campus counterparts but often surpassed their scores.

Finally, again at the course level, some long-standing and worthwhile assessment techniques continue. Some chemistry students take a national standardized exam. For years, the English Department has held a day-long assessment day for core courses English 101 and 102 where teachers read a random selection of essays, evaluate them through a rubric, establish goals for improvement, evaluate the goals the following year, and repeat the process. We have just begun including a developmental class, English 091, as a yearly assessment.

In another ongoing assessment, roughly a third of full-time instructors use ParScore, another of the College’s investments in assessment, to refine their testing. The product is used for test scoring and item analysis, and the result is the ability to remove ambiguous questions from tests and modify lecture presentations to cover points more clearly.

The College believes many of our new course-level assessments will likely also become techniques used on a continual basis.
Assessment Level 5: Classroom

If there is any one assessment tool that leads to improved teaching and learning at the College, it is the use of Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs). Modeled on Angelo and Cross’s Classroom Assessment Techniques handbook, CATs offer instructors information on what, how much, and how well their students are learning. Each semester, the assessment coordinator distributes instructions, information, an “Assessing and Improving Learning Report Form,” and a sample report form. Instructors are asked to participate in at least one Classroom Assessment Technique and to report whether and how the assessment led to change in their instruction and improved student learning. The report form encourages accountability for assessing and improving student learning, and it also provides the assessment coordinator with evidence of how often and in what ways instructors are actively assessing student learning. In addition, the practice of using Classroom Assessment Techniques communicates to students how much the College and its instructors value their learning. It also encourages students to consider their own learning and what instruction and study methods work for them.

Not as many faculty members submit their CATs forms as the assessment coordinator would like. For each of the last four semesters, the “Assessing and Improving Learning Report Form” was distributed to all faculty to document their use of CATs. On average, 41% of full-timers and 12% of part-timers sent back a report, but when asked on the 2009 Faculty Survey whether they use assessment or evaluation tools in their disciplines, 92.2% of full-time faculty say they do. More importantly, almost all indicated some change in teaching and how it led to improved learning.

The Academic Master Plan 2007-2011 established two goals for the assessment committee; the first was to collaborate with the Office of Institutional Research to improve tracking of students’ goals, including their performance at the College and performance at transfer institutions. Muskegon Community College has always done some things to track student success, and committees and task forces have come and gone with some regularity. The most recent, and perhaps most promising venture started in 2007 with the creation of a student goal-tracking system committee which established two main goals for a goal-tracking system:

1. Find out if students achieve their goals at the College
2. Offer additional help to those struggling to reach their goals

Underlying these goals is the desire to demonstrate that many students at Muskegon Community College, not just those who graduate, are successful in achieving their goals. Although collecting such information might seem easy, the committee ran into many frustrating roadblocks, in part the result of the rapid turnover in chief information officers. By the time one CIO understood what was needed on the application for admission, he would leave.

The student goal-tracking system is finally being implemented. Better questions related to student educational goals are being asked at the application stage, and their responses are being verified each time they register. The ability to collect meaningful information on student goal achievement is finally possible.

Another bit of progress for the tracking system happened quite serendipitously. While looking for useful data, we discovered all students taking our required COMPASS placement test must also answer certain personal questions regarding their need for help with reading, writing, math, financial aid, a learning disability, a physical disability, veterans’ issues, and choosing a major.
Only a small handful of people knew this information existed, a rather significant example of the need to improve communication. Hundreds of new students had told us they needed help in some way, but we never responded. Now the names of students requesting help are forwarded to the appropriate office and students are contacted personally; at least that is the goal. Achieving a meaningful student goal-tracking system remains a priority.

**Strengths Related to Core Component 3a**

- The required progress report on assessment completed in 2004 helped us clarify our vision of assessment
- The Academic Master Plan has succeeded in assessing needs, generating goals, and tracking improvements in yearly updates
- There is increased participation of faculty in assessment, particularly at the classroom level, where positive changes in teaching and learning are made
- Liberal arts discipline reviews contribute to a culture of assessment by faculty leading the process
- Self-Study Evaluations of Occupational Programs are done consistently and lead to improved instruction
- We have clear general education purpose statements making assessment possible
- Some course level assessment is ongoing (ninth year of English 101 assessment day) but new and innovative techniques are also being added
- Mandatory testing and placement, coupled with our Ready to Succeed policy, help students enroll in courses where they can succeed

**Challenges Related to Core Component 3a**

- Getting faculty to see their stake in assessment as ownership rather than compliance remains a challenge
- Standardized testing of general education has not led to significant changes, although it has affirmed some previous changes
- Completion of liberal arts discipline reviews remains slow
- New course-specific student evaluations have produced mountains of data but barely any analysis
- The general education survey is also insufficiently analyzed
- A means to assess general education for the Associate in Applied Science degree should be developed
Core Component 3b: The organization values and supports effective teaching.

Summary of Core Component 3b
Support for effective teaching at Muskegon Community College begins with hiring well-qualified faculty members. These faculty members determine what should be taught at the College; they develop and review courses and curriculum through processes that are largely controlled by instructors. Faculty are also usually evaluated on schedule and sometimes recognized for their achievements. The College’s administration supports continuous faculty growth by encouraging instructors to participate in a variety of professional development opportunities. However, Muskegon Community College faces challenges in the hiring, development, and remuneration of adjuncts. We could also do a better job of speeding up the hiring process of new full-time faculty, mentoring them once hired, and recognizing faculty achievements. As a whole, Muskegon Community College values and supports effective teaching and meets the standards of Core Component 3b.

Qualified Faculty

The College believes effective teaching requires qualified faculty. Muskegon Community College employs 97 (as of the 2008-2009 academic year) full-time faculty and approximately 180 adjunct faculty. We are proud of our mission to keep on staff as many full-time faculty as possible. These efforts benefit students: Our teacher to student ratio is twenty to one.

We are in agreement that full-time faculty who retire must be replaced as allowed by budget constraints and complex economic times. While we approach the end of writing this report, a change has occurred that will greatly affect faculty hiring: Over 15% of full-time faculty are accepting an early retirement offer from the State of Michigan (many other employees are also leaving).

The hiring of full-time faculty is a thorough process as evidenced by the requirement of candidates to submit written answers to several pedagogical and philosophical questions related to teaching and learning, and then perform a teaching lesson for the hiring committee. All approved candidates are interviewed by a committee consisting of a member from Human Resources, an administrator from Academic Affairs, the appropriate department chair, and three to five faculty members within and outside of the respective department. A significant portion of the interview is the teaching presentation by the interviewee. Full-time faculty in almost all areas are required to have a Master’s degree. Our interviewing and hiring procedures allow us to employ the best possible instructors.

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One way we could improve is to shorten the time between posting and filling full-time faculty positions. Often the College is still interviewing in the summer months, and qualified applicants may have already gone elsewhere. Lack of adequate HR staffing exacerbates these problems. Three challenges regarding adjunct faculty are also evident. First, although some departments try to follow the same steps required for hiring full-time instructors, most department chairs are
faced with such a challenge to cover all classes with adjuncts that careful scrutiny is difficult. Second, once hired, there are few opportunities for professional development for adjuncts. These valued employees are provided with a dinner orientation and a handy “New Faculty Orientation Manual.” Our procedures help ensure that new part-timers know where to copy a test, but may have little training in how to write a good one. Third, low adjunct pay is an issue for which there is no consensus. Budget constraints keep pay down, but the need to attract and keep good adjuncts suggests that pay should go up. One benefit adjuncts have is they get travel pay if they live thirty miles from campus.

◆ Faculty Determine Course and Curricular Content

The administration’s confidence in its faculty is evidenced by their allowing instructors to develop and evaluate the College’s curriculum. At the department level, chair positions are held by faculty, not administrators; therefore, instructors have direct involvement in issues such as budget, facilities, and curriculum. Almost all plans to create new courses and programs, or eliminate them, come directly from the faculty based on instructors’ research, community need, professional advisory councils, state and national standards, and transferability of courses. Faculty members in occupational programs consult with advisory committees regarding the currency of existing curricula and potential new offerings, but the faculty determines if changes are needed.

Proposed curricular changes, or policies related to curriculum, can be brought by anyone to our Instructional Affairs Council, but almost all changes are initiated by instructors. This council, the most active of our five, has sixteen faculty members out of twenty-three council members. The assessment committee, a standing committee reporting to the Instructional Affairs Council, is dominated by faculty, including its chair.

All new courses must be brought before the IAC using the comprehensive “New Course Proposal Form.” This form and others related to course and program approval were thoroughly reviewed and rewritten during the 2008-2009 academic year. The faculty members who develop a course or program must appear at the council meeting for a question-and-answer session. The faculty proposes, and the faculty approves, any changes in courses.

An opportunities team, again largely consisting of faculty, was created when the Academic Master Plan was adopted, its purpose being to assess and prioritize both present and future programming opportunities. After initial enthusiasm for this process, faculty began to find it easier to just bring proposals directly to the Instructional Affairs Council.

Many faculty have also developed innovative changes that do not need approval by the councils, but nevertheless have as their goal improved learning and more effective teaching.

Faculty assisting other faculty to improve teaching is illustrated by the process of getting approval to teach an online class. Faculty members teaching an online or hybrid style course for the first time are required to go through a systematic peer evaluation before the course goes live. The faculty member also works with the instructional design specialist to build the course. This process has worked well; there have been instances when a course was not approved to go live and when a course was not continued the following semester.
In addition, in 2005 the College formed a distance education advisory committee. The committee makes all major decisions involving distance education, including how we can better implement integrity within our online courses. The College seems to be doing well with evaluating new courses, but if a course has been offered for quite a long time, it doesn’t get evaluated.

◆ Faculty Evaluation and Recognition

We believe effective teaching can become better if it is evaluated and recognized. Faculty at the College are evaluated formally by established and fair guidelines that usually are followed. Recognition of excellent teaching does occur, but there is no formal program to ensure that it happens.

At the department level, all tenured faculty members are supposed to be evaluated every three years. These timelines are honored for the most part, but not in all cases. This schedule has recently gone off track; we had a flurry of evaluations take place during the 2009-2010 year because of a change in leadership in the Academic Affairs Office. New full-time faculty are evaluated twice in their first year and yearly for the following two years before being eligible for tenure. We adhere closely to the schedule of evaluating new full-timers.

All full-time faculty members are evaluated on the basis of content expertise, instructional delivery, instructional design, and course management. The evaluators consist of the Vice President for Academic Affairs, the department chair, a faculty member outside of the department and a colleague chosen by the person being evaluated. Several other factors may be evaluated, such as contribution to departments and the College, and professional organization membership. By having many options for feedback, instructors have a good chance of finding their evaluations helpful for personal growth.

A required evaluation tool is the Student Learning Survey, which asks some generic questions, as is typical, about instructors and teaching techniques. Uniquely, students are also asked how well they learned the course’s objectives. Thus surveys are course specific: Every English 101 instructor, for example, uses the same survey, but it is different from the English 102 survey because course objectives are different. Most instructors, particularly adjuncts, see this tool as a source of valuable feedback on what is going well and what could be improved. Our 2009 Faculty Survey shows that 38% of full-time faculty make changes in instruction at least once a semester based on student feedback. Another 27% affirm they make changes at least once a year, and 34% say they do so occasionally. Adjunct responses were very similar. The College is in the process of developing a plan to analyze and interpret the information collected and finish creating surveys for all courses that are still using our more generic survey. In addition to these surveys, nearly half of the faculty report that they use Classroom Assessment Techniques (CAT’s) and regard the resulting feedback from students as an important reason for making changes in instruction and seeing if the change works.

Overall, our evaluation processes help instructors to be more effective, but for effective teaching to continue, recognition is helpful. Muskegon Community College does recognize, in perhaps subtle and indirect ways, faculty initiatives and accomplishments. For many years every full-time instructor in the occupational departments has had the opportunity to go to the annual TRENDS in occupational education conference attended by all community colleges in Michigan. Some faculty have made presentations or served on the conference planning committee. It is a useful but also fun place to go and is regarded as an enjoyable benefit. More important, the Vice President of Academic Affairs, nearly every year, has successfully nominated members of our faculty for state-
wide teaching honors, and many instructors (a dozen over the past fifteen years) have a plaque on their walls to remind them of that special recognition. Adjunct faculty members are honored with an annual dinner at which the focus has been to have them “show and tell” about some aspect of teaching. It has been well attended and well received.

Faculty Seminar Days, which occur over two days at the onset of fall and winter semesters, are often used to recognize faculty or departments who have made significant contributions or for academic accomplishments. For the last two years each department presented departmental news to all faculty.

The College has also promoted campus talks, exhibits, and panels exhibiting various travel experiences by faculty. These include yearly faculty travel to Thailand, trips to Germany (organized by our international coordinator), a Fulbright trip opportunity to Africa, and a personal faculty trip to Russia and other parts of the world.

The College also periodically (frequency is increasing) sends news releases to the public via our local newspaper and also shares this news internally. For example, our Nursing Department has been exemplary in its achievements, and emails and news releases are always sent to the entire college community so that those faculty members are recognized.

Faculty also recognize themselves at commencement each year for the past ten years; a faculty scholarship has been awarded to a student in the name of outstanding work done by a faculty member or faculty team.

In 2010 the administration revived a tradition of honoring employees who have been working at the College for a minimum of five years, and then every five years thereafter. Employees from all units, including faculty, are recognized at a luncheon.

◆ Support for Faculty Professional Development

We also believe effective teachers benefit from opportunities to keep up with changes in their field, changes in society, and changes in the way students learn. The College’s administration offers the faculty many opportunities for professional growth.

First, the College supports professional development designed to facilitate teaching to varied learning environments. How we create, maintain, and use these environments is detailed in Core Component 3c.

Second, Muskegon Community College has been up to the challenge of supporting faculty to explore various technologies and in providing technology resources for faculty. Analysis of technology for faculty is found in Core Component 3d.

A third indication that the College values the improvement of effective teaching is that Muskegon Community College provides services to support improved pedagogies that may or may not be related to technology. Our 2009 Faculty Survey shows that in the last five years, 94% of full-time instructors have “attended services/training/workshops that have helped to support improved pedagogies…” The College encourages faculty to belong to professional organizations within their disciplines (not financially supported) and to attend approved conferences (usually
supported). In the same survey, instructors were asked, “Do you belong to and actively participate in any professional organizations relevant to the discipline in which you teach?” Seventy-five percent said “yes.” In addition, 81% said they had “attended an off-campus professional conference, workshop, seminar, or training related to their work at MCC.”

But faculty don’t have to leave town to experience professional development. Our Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) is dedicated to the mission of providing a physical area for one-on-one technology training or small group training. The Center also promotes discussions, course building, syllabus building, and conducting effective discussions both online and offline. It is also a place for faculty to have academic discussions. A significant part of the book budget for the CTL has been spent on books pertaining to improved pedagogies.

For the past five years, the CTL has directed the Faculty Seminar Days, providing choices of workshops and breakout sessions about both technology and non-technology-related issues.

Effective teaching also improves because faculty actively pursue further study and conduct research. The College supports opportunities for one or two faculty sabbaticals each year for the purpose of course development, curricular reviews, and other professional growth. Upon return from sabbatical, the faculty member makes a full report to the Board and the sabbatical committee concerning the value of the experience. The College has had many instructors take advantage of this opportunity.

Finally, the College supports the view that effective teaching involves sharing with and learning from colleagues. Sometimes our faculty teach each other; for example, our first annual MayDays Summer Institute occurred in May 2009 featuring three full-time faculty as presenters. Sometimes our faculty sponsors activities aimed at guest colleagues from our local high schools, such as the English Department’s annual (for forty years) Muskegon Area Teachers of English conference. Finally, the College also has sponsored conferences for our colleagues at other colleges and universities, such as the Michigan Community College Biologists’ Conference in 2008. Thus the College supports not only professional growth for instructors but also our instructors’ efforts to provide professional growth for the faculty of local high schools and colleges across the state.

Some further examples include:

- A week-long math technology conference offered by one of our full-time math instructors
- The Social Sciences Department has twice sponsored a state-wide conference for the Michigan Sociological Association
- Our faculty librarian has provided seminars on course packs
- The Fine Arts Department has presented a Shakespeare workshop
- The Education Department is well known in the area for its annual Early Childhood Conference
- A Computer Forensics workshop (part of Criminal Justice) was held this past year
- The Writers’ Center Conference was held during fall 2007
- The Michigan Community College Virtual Learning Collaborative and Educational Technology Organization of Michigan Conference for online faculty was held in spring 2007 (twenty-eight of our own faculty either presented or participated)

One additional challenge we face is offering immediate professional development help to new full-time instructors. By contract, they are supposed to be provided with a mentor, but unfortunately
often no mentor is named or the relationship falls by the wayside. We are rather rigorous in our hiring, but are not vigorous in offering assistance to new instructors.

Overall, it is evident that the College supports a wide range of professional development opportunities, and it should be equally clear that faculty members avail themselves of these opportunities.

**Strengths Related to Core Component 3b**

- The College hires top-notch instructors who are ready to teach in a community college environment
- The College appropriately allows the faculty to develop, evaluate, and improve courses and programs
- To ensure effective teaching, the College follows appropriate evaluation procedures and informally recognizes faculty achievements
- Muskegon Community College offers many professional development opportunities to encourage continuous faculty improvement
- We have an approximate one-to-two ratio of full-time to adjunct

**Challenges Related to Core Component 3b**

- We need to do a better job of adding to our pool of qualified adjuncts
- We need to provide more ways for these valuable part-time instructors to grow professionally
- Many adjuncts come and go, and perhaps we should look at better incentives, mainly money, for them to stay
- We do not always follow through on assigning mentors for new full-time faculty
- We would benefit ourselves by speeding up the hiring process for new full-time faculty
- We need to adhere to a schedule and process for evaluating full-time faculty
- We can do a better job of recognizing faculty achievements
- Replacing a larger than normal group of retiring faculty will be both challenging and interesting
Core Component 3c: The organization creates effective learning environments.

Summary of Core Component 3c
The previous core component gave reasons why students at Muskegon Community College encounter effective teaching in their classes. As we take a look at how the College meets Core Component 3c, we can see how effective teaching and learning may be enhanced by the places students are taught. We have diverse students with different backgrounds and different styles of learning; therefore, we think offering a variety of environments increases students’ chances of success. Students at the College benefit by being taught in a wide array of learning environments, on campus and away from campus, and academic support is given to all. The sufficiency of existing learning spaces is monitored by two of our plans, the Academic Master Plan and most critically, the Campus Master Plan, which focuses on facilities and their part in student learning. Our effective learning environments show that Muskegon Community College meets Core Component 3c.

On-Campus Learning Environments

Many Muskegon Community College classrooms look like they did the last time we hosted a comprehensive visit—an instructor behind a podium, students arrayed in rows of desks or tables, and a white board or two on the walls. This combination of expert lecturers and small class sizes at the College, the majority between fifteen and twenty-five students, still works for some instructors to create a great environment for learning.

Now, however, it is likely a visitor will see new technologies enhancing this style of teaching: Almost all classrooms have data projectors or SmartBoards or clickers, or classrooms full of computers (roughly 1,200 PCs, almost one for every four students). What difference these tools make in student learning is difficult to measure beyond listening to the enthusiastic anecdotes of their advocates.

A large percentage of our students take courses that are necessarily outside of the traditional classroom. For example, science courses require both lecture and laboratory experiences. Unfortunately, students will not always find adequate lab facilities. Some programs, including physics, physical science, engineering, and geology labs were remodeled almost ten years ago, but are still quite good and up-to-date with equipment. Our latest lab to be added is for geography and includes advanced software to support a new program in Geographic Information Systems. Astronomy has two labs, an off-campus observatory that’s quite new, and a planetarium, which is long overdue for a major upgrade. Fundraising efforts are underway for the planetarium. Chemistry labs have multiple problems with aged equipment, lack of space, and accessibility for disabled students. Life Science facilities are not very conducive for teaching and learning, particularly for disabled students or faculty, for current students who are taller than previous generations, and for using new technology. Rooms are small and passages narrow, tables are too low, and electrical circuits are minimal.

Although most classrooms are under one roof, a bonus in Michigan, some environments for learning require students to step outside of the main building. A short distance south and east of the main building are the gymnasium, fitness centers (unfortunately, workout equipment is old and space is limited), baseball fields, tennis courts and uniquely, a golf course. All are well maintained and serve student athletes, students taking their required physical education courses, and the
general public when available. Some of the physical education courses send students to rivers and lakes for canoeing and kayaking, to the beach for volleyball, to the YMCA pool for swimming, or to the slopes for skiing and snowboarding. It is clear that taking a “gym class” doesn’t necessarily mean sending students to the gym.

Outside the main building again, this time to the north, are the industrial manufacturing labs, all of which can rightly claim to have cutting-edge curriculum and facilities. The studio art building, which offers another hands-on experiential learning environment, is also in the north part of campus, separate from the main building. The Commercial Driver License program uses the north parking lot for its behind-the-wheel training, an environment that is far from a traditional classroom.

Some learning spaces are made available to students for very specific subjects or modes of learning, such as the art building, the theater, music rooms, dance studios, and an art gallery. All could be made better, especially the studio art building—a pole barn that resembles the maintenance building standing next to it. The College is awaiting a decision from the State on whether there will be capital outlay funds to build or remodel an art and media center, possibly in downtown Muskegon.

Finally, varied learning environments don’t always require unique physical spaces. For example, private offices, some tables and chairs, and a handful of computers allow the instructors who teach basic math, English, and reading in the extensively remodeled College Success Center to engage in one-on-one instruction as well as small groups in a classroom. Math Department instructors are also experimenting with self-paced, computer-based courses that allow more attention to be paid to students who are struggling, and also alleviate the frustration of those who wish to work ahead.

◆ Off-Campus Learning Environments

Some instructors have embraced technology whole-heartedly and have put their classes completely online, a different learning environment for most students. As of winter 2010, a quarter of our students take at least one class online, and one in ten enrolls in a hybrid course. Recognizing that not all students will work effectively in a virtual learning environment, the College urges students to complete a questionnaire before enrolling in an online class to help measure their likelihood of success.

More tangible than cyberspace, students benefit from having access to apprenticeship sites. From 2005 to 2008, over sixty students completed an apprenticeship program offered by twenty-four different companies. Although the number of participants is not large, it has been steady.

Students at the College also have the opportunity to participate in international travel, modeling simulations, and field trips to historical sites. During the last ten years, the College has participated in an exchange program with Kaufmannische Schule Stuttgart Nort in Stuttgart, Germany. Approximately 125 faculty and students have traveled to Germany with this program.

In addition, students may meet with like-minded community college students from across the country to participate in modeling simulations. Since 2002-2003, over a hundred students have participated as representatives of several different countries in the Model United Nations, Model Arab League, and Model NATO national conferences. Recently the College has approved a course called Gettysburg Battlefields in which 60% of the students’ grades are determined by their preparation for and participation in a four-day visit to the historic site.
We attempt to bring the world to our students through several means, including our award-winning Global Awareness Festival. The College’s program is one of eight community colleges in Michigan over the years to be recognized by a statewide organization, the Liberal Arts Network for Development, for its efforts to promote international learning. In addition, the very active International Affairs Club sponsors a dozen or so activities each year, including discussions, lectures, films, and guest speakers. The College’s chapter of the Phi Theta Kappa honor society both exposes its members to new learning environments and encourages its members to view their own college as an environment in which to share knowledge with others beyond the classroom. For example, members of Phi Theta Kappa attend international conventions in major cities across the country each spring. On their own campus, Phi Theta Kappans challenge their classmates to engage in scholarly topics (such as “The Paradox of Affluence” and “The Democratization of Information”) outside of the classroom by attending film discussions and participating in a fine arts showcase.

◆ Support for Off- and On-Campus Learning Environments

Muskegon Community College constantly tries to create a welcoming environment where students can learn. Inside the front entrance to the main building, the new Student One-Stop Center offers a place for students to get one-on-one assistance in applying for admission, seeing a counselor, filing for financial aid, taking placement tests, buying books, and registering for classes.

As one of our mission commitments says, “MCC is committed to provide comprehensive student services that are conducive to student learning and satisfaction in all facets of the college experience and appropriate to an open door community college.”

These services should be available to all students, regardless of their physical location, and the College is committed to this somewhat difficult task. We try by attempting to offer support services in several ways: At the core of the College’s services are our counselors who are faculty members and thus committed to helping students learn. The College’s advising system focuses on helping students define their goals and identify the paths to reach them. A byproduct is retention. Counselors help students enroll in appropriate courses based on placement tests and other factors and then regularly compare how well counseled students do in their classes compared with students who did not avail themselves of our counselors’ assistance. A study prepared by the counselors in January 2006 shows that new counseled students are much more likely to re-enroll a year later than new students who did not meet with a counselor. Particularly remarkable is the evidence suggesting that this persistence can be expected regardless of the students’ placement test scores. The same report shows that 94% of students who had been placed on academic probation between spring of 2005 and fall of 2006 and then met with a counselor and re-enrolled, improved their grade point averages.

As other statistics reveal, students with higher placement scores are likely to persist in enrollment. In the following chart, an A code indicates students are prepared for college-level reading and writing; B through D codes indicate increasing deficiencies in reading and writing skills; and an E code indicates serious deficiencies in reading and writing skills. This chart shows that regardless of their English placement code, counseled students are much more likely to return a year later than new students who did not meet with a counselor.
Counselors are providing these services to a record number of students, increasing faster than the rise in enrollment. In the calendar year 2008, the counselors had 8,111 contacts with students by appointment or through the walk-in services. The number of contacts in 2009 grew 35% to 10,950.

We are not exactly sure why, but some reasons seem probable. First, federal and state programs like the Trade Readjustment Act (TRA) and No Worker Left Behind have brought in a group of older, recently unemployed students, many of whom have not attended college before. Second, more orientations are being offered and more students attend them, resulting in more being able to meet with counselors. Third, increased enrollment overall affects all student services including counseling.

In an attempt to reach students who don’t come to campus, three counselors attended a distance counseling workshop. Also the Counseling and Advising Center began to track the number of email advising responses. One challenge for the future will be for the department to assess whether distance counseling produces the same persistence numbers as in-office counseling.

Another learning environment available to students regardless of location is the Hendrik Meijer Library/Information Technology Center. The library Web site contains information for off-campus students and staff who can access the 17,000 full text periodicals, 23,000 digital books or other premium research resources provided by the library for remote access. The librarians have created video clips, Power Point presentations, and Web pages to assist the students and staff in searching for the information they need. Those with questions are encouraged to email, telephone, or use the 24/7 live chat reference service provided by the Library. That assistance in learning can only occur if students have access to the Center.

Another important service offered to students anywhere is the Office of Information Technology helpdesk, available by phone twenty-four hours a day seven days a week. Online technical support is also available at any time.

The College also offers opportunities for the COMPASS placement testing in places other than on our campus. The Testing Center staff go to the larger local high schools to test. In the northern part of our service area, staff go to the Newaygo County Regional Educational Service Agency and test students from five smaller high schools plus local adults. Students can satisfy our placement tests requirement as far away as another state by taking the test at a certified college center that forwards us results. We also assist local residents planning to attend another college in Michigan, by allowing them to test at our center for free and then results are forwarded elsewhere. Finally, the Testing Center is involved in an experiment with several local high schools to test freshmen using the COMPASS with Diagnostics test to identify students who will likely be far behind by the time they start college.
Other attempts to bring services to off-campus sites include access to online tutoring. Requests for tutoring of any kind have fluctuated in a downward direction: In 2004 there were 462 requests, and over the next four years 364, 178, 325, and 240. How many students use the online tutoring is unknown. It may well be that requests have exceeded our ability to meet them and students seek help elsewhere.

◆ Evaluating the College’s Learning Environments

There is no single office responsible for monitoring the benefits, or drawbacks, of offering students a variety of learning methods and places. In addition to the evidence offered in Core Component 3a of assessing student learning, evaluation comes primarily from two of our plans.

First, the Academic Master Plan was published in 2007 and was followed by prioritizing of goals and then an annual update from all areas affected by the plan. Many goals had to do with improvement of learning places, such as the modernizing of the College Success Center, the physical home of our math, reading, and writing developmental courses.

The most important decisions about the use of learning spaces have come from the 2000 Campus Master Plan. In January 1999, Muskegon Community College commissioned Tower Pinkster Titus Associates, Inc. to develop a facilities plan. What emerged was a clear consensus on the desire to make Muskegon Community College a student-centered college, where programs and services are designed with the students’ interests foremost in mind. Student-centered learning became the focal point throughout the process and in the development of recommendations for the master plan. This focus resulted in the plan’s title: 2000 Campus Master Plan: Student-Centered Learning for the New Millennium.

This plan was a catalyst for change. We hope the soon-to-be completed new master plan will continue to guide our creation of the best learning environments.

Strengths Related to Core Component 3c

• The College successfully attempts to provide effective learning environments for students on our campus
• Advances in technology have made it possible to create varied learning environments
• We also offer courses off-campus to provide greater access, such as hybrid and fully online classes
• We give students opportunities, such as excursions to Gettysburg or Germany, that cannot be duplicated on campus
• Access to learning support systems for all students is our goal
• We are committed to find ways of assessing learning environments, for example, comparing the grades in an online course and the same course offered on campus
Challenges Related to Core Component 3c

• Assessment attempts to evaluate learning environments might be interesting, but given so many variables, hardly sufficient

• With such a variety of places to learn, it is difficult to determine whether learning improves with a change of environment

• Our facilities Master Plan is now ten years old; a new one needs to be implemented

• We need to study the declining use of our Tutoring Center
Core Component 3d: The organization’s learning resources support student learning and effective teaching.

Summary of Core Component 3d
In Core Component 3b we looked at the people who create effective teaching—the faculty. In 3c we looked at places, the varied learning environments that may enhance student learning. Here in 3d, we look at things, the supporting resources that help ensure those learning environments can be effective. We will demonstrate that the budget support, technical support, access to support, and our support from partnerships offer evidence that we meet Core Component 3d.

◆ Budget Support

At Muskegon Community College recently, budget support has often meant budgeting money for big-ticket items. The two most visible examples are the Student One-Stop and the Hendrik Meijer Library/Information Technology Center, but huge capital outlays have also been used to completely refurbish the College Success Center, the Nursing Department, the Student Union, the bookstore, and many other smaller areas. The College continues to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to outsource our information technology services. Whether or not these expenditures have contributed significantly to student learning cannot be calculated by a simple formula or rubric, but common sense suggests that well-equipped learning environments are an advantage to both students and instructor.

The College’s commitment to improving student learning and effective teaching is recognizable not only in big, one-time expenditures but also in the ongoing creation of annual budgets. Of course the largest amount of money that goes directly into effective teaching is the amount spent on the costs of instructors. In the general fund budget for 2009-2010, 50% percent is earmarked for instruction, meaning the academic departments, including full- and part-time instructors. Some budgeting goals overlap. The assessment office, for example, is staffed by a full-time faculty member given half his annual load as released time. Academic departments turn in requests to the assessment office for projects involving assessing student learning as part of the budgeting process.

An additional 8% of the general fund is targeted for instructional support, including the Academic Affairs Office, Distance Education, the Center for Teaching and Learning, the Library, and the College Success Center. Other administrative functions are strongly related to improving student learning and effective teaching, such as the Testing Center, and the Office of Institutional Research, which has made very helpful contributions to the assessment of student learning, primarily in helping others to make more data-informed decisions.

So, the College certainly monetarily supports teaching and learning by funding big projects, supplying faculty costs, and funding other learning support offices. The question remains: Are we funding the right things?

◆ Technical Support for Teaching

For faculty, many possible technologies to use in the classroom are available; however, our 2009 Faculty Survey found instructors fairly ambivalent about support: 6% said technical difficulties in their classrooms regularly disrupt learning, and another 58% said occasionally. Faculty were also asked which description applies to technology in their classrooms and 32% picked “old and slow” and 63% said “current”; only four of seventy-nine responses chose “cutting edge.” Despite these perceptions, training for using technology is generally highly regarded and well attended. The many opportunities to acquire technical skills right on campus are described in our analysis of Core Component 3b.
The perceptions of former students toward our technologies are difficult to determine. When we surveyed former students who had gone on to four-year colleges, we found 94% had been on our campus within the last two years, meaning after our information technology had been outsourced, and the new library had opened. When asked to rank “library services and materials” compared to their transfer college, 9% said they were better at the College, with 24% saying services were about the same. When asked to rank “orientation to and instruction in use of campus computers,” 52% simply said “no basis to judge,” implying that there were no, or few, technology orientations or instructions available. Admittedly, the sample size is limited to transfer students, but it does suggest the College should at least more widely publicize available help.

Technical training for support staff has, unfortunately, not been an organized effort, but our conference and catering service has taken responsibility for this task in the last year or so. Staff members still need more training in the relatively newly implemented Datatel Colleague system. Organized efforts to improve staff knowledge for doing their own job would be worthwhile in themselves, but the issue crosses over into the realm of teaching and learning when, for example, the Tutoring Center staff cannot effectively track the achievements of students receiving their services.

♦ Access

Muskegon Community College has a variety of learning environments and supports learning in those places. But we would be remiss if we did not make every effort to provide access to these tools to enhance learning. We are an open-door institution, and we try not to exclude anyone.

One clear way we offer access is that our Special Services Office works specifically to create access to learning environments for a very broad range of students. With a grant from the Carl Perkins program, we were able in 2008-2009 to provide the following groups of students academic accommodations, as well as tuition, fees, and books:

- Physically Disabled
- Displaced Homemakers
- Economically Disadvantaged
- Single Parents
- Limited English Proficient
- Learning Disabled
- Non-Traditional Training and Employment

The Special Services efforts complement the newly established Student One-Stop Center. All points of inquiry have been physically consolidated on the campus providing students one place to access all that they need.

The campus as a whole is accessible to all students regardless of their special needs. We are in full compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Since the last team visit, we have made some changes that make access easier and the campus safer:

- **Built a new three-stop elevator (our building is three levels) near the new library**
- **Moved the elevator near the main entrance to be right next to the Special Services Office**
- **Refurbished and enlarged a three-stop elevator on the east side of the building**
- **Installed fire doors that are kept open making passage through the doors easier***
Criterion Three ♦ Student Learning and Effective Teaching

- Improved fire doors to automatically close if an alarm sounds, helping to stop any fire
- Installed Event Link, an automated emergency message system that texts or emails students and staff who have signed up for the system

◆ Partnerships

Core Component 5c will describe in some detail Muskegon Community College’s partnerships with other colleges and universities and with K-12 districts in our service area. In addition, our partnerships with other organizations allow us to offer learning experiences that we could not offer by ourselves. A simple example is that students enrolled in our two major health programs, nursing and respiratory therapy, are welcomed by the city’s hospitals, clinics, and nursing homes. Nursing practice sites by themselves involve cooperation with three other programs in the West Michigan area we serve, and with eight health agencies under the umbrella of the Lakeshore Clinical Placement Consortium.

Early childhood education students also have practice sites such as Headstart agencies, nursing homes, and day care centers. Also, the agreements with the Virtual Learning Collaborative allow students to take online courses from any Michigan community college, some of which may not be offered by Muskegon Community College.

There are many other examples of such cooperative arrangements. In our 2009 Faculty Survey, instructors were asked “What partnerships have you fostered in your course offerings?” and they responded with dozens of examples, some internally, such as team teaching, and some externally, such as cooperation with environmental groups.

More important than this list of partnerships is the faculty response to the next question: “How do these partnerships translate into better learning for your students?” Once again dozens claimed a positive impact and listed numerous examples. Supportive partnerships seem to clearly improve instructional opportunities and subsequently improve student learning.

Strengths Related to Core Component 3d

- Various resources to support learning environments seem adequate
- Assessment expenditures are part of the faculty budget process
- Partnerships increase students’ learning options
- Our campus is more physically accessible than ever before
- Technical support and training for faculty are ongoing
- The Special Services Office aids students

Challenges Related to Core Component 3d

- It is difficult to know how adequate resources to help learning environments impact student learning
- Additional training needs for staff remain
CRITERION FOUR • Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge

Muskegon Community College promotes a life of learning for its faculty, administration, staff, and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways consistent with its mission.
CRITERION FOUR ◆ Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge

Introduction to Criterion Four

Muskegon Community College found that Criterion Four had a more philosophical tone urging us to think about the answers we might have to important questions: Are our academic programs sufficiently rigorous? Are our goals for learning good ones? Are we preparing students for satisfying careers? Are we instilling in students a desire for a life of learning? Fortunately, our answer to each of these and similar questions is “Yes.” We will demonstrate that our mission documents, our actions, and our commitment of resources very plainly support the importance of lifelong learning. A future commitment to learning is based on a solid, well-considered general education program. We will show why we think our goals for learning are clearly stated and important; we believe our goals help prepare students realistically for a meaningful future. Finally, we will evaluate the academic and student support services that are aimed to help students be successful. We believe that the standards of an effective learning organization stated in Criterion Four describe Muskegon Community College.

Core Component 4a: The organization demonstrates, through the actions of its board, administrators, students, faculty, and staff, that it values a life of learning.

Summary of Core Component 4a
Muskegon Community College affirms that learning should not stop when formal education is completed. Our numerous mission statements demonstrate this commitment to promoting a life of learning. These statements also strongly support academic freedom that is needed for learning to flourish. Resources support a culture of lifelong learning: however, they are unequally distributed among the faculty and other internal constituents. Helping students and members of the community, including the Board, to continually increase their learning is a high priority for the College. For all College employees and students, more recognition for academic achievement should occur. Because the College supports a life of learning in its mission statements, its resources, and its actions, Core Component 4a is accomplished.

◆ Mission Statements and Our Commitment to Lifelong Learning

Muskegon Community College’s Mission Statement starts with the proclamation that it is “a center for lifelong learning.” The statement’s nine commitments make this general statement more specific, including the development of “long-term learning skills for the changing challenges of the future.” The commitment to prepare students for a “sophisticated workplace of the 21st century” demonstrates that the College recognizes the importance of lifelong learning in one’s career. The commitment to provide “general educational experiences necessary for persons to function as effective citizens” recognizes that a lifetime of learning is also necessary to live a good life.

These purpose statements that encourage lifelong learning are echoed in the Strategic Plan 2006-2011. The plan establishes four priorities, including “Enhance Outreach Programs to Establish MCC as a Center for Lifelong Learning.” Other mission documents, such as the Academic Master Plan 2007-2011, demonstrate the priority given to lifelong learning. Our analysis of educational market trends during the development of the plan led to the conclusion that “special attention should be paid to preparing students with lifelong learning skills necessary for individuals’
success.” Also, the Hendrik Meijer Library Mission Statement says: “The library extends services to the community and serves as catalyst in the lifelong learning process…” for our service area.

Another mission document that supports lifelong learning is the “Purpose of General Education” for the Associate in Science and Arts degree, which begins with this statement: “The College shares the view held by many that an education should prepare you not only for a career, but also for life.” The statement identifies six general abilities that are acquired through a combination of knowledge and skills needed “to understand both yourself and the world you live in.” Similarly the “Purpose of General Education” for the Associate in Applied Science degree identifies among its purposes the offering of an “education that enhances your life as a citizen and in the workplace.” The College believes completing our general education requirements lays the foundation for a life of learning.

Such goals can best be promoted in an environment where both staff and students can enjoy academic freedom. In an environment of academic freedom, faculty members are encouraged to present a wide range of learning opportunities to students, and students may investigate ideas beyond their normal experiences. An atmosphere of freedom allows learning to flourish and sets a precedent for a life of learning. The academic freedom of the faculty is solidly supported by the Board of Trustees Policy Manual and entirely repeated in the Faculty Master Agreement: “Faculty members shall have the freedom to report the truth as they see it both in the classroom and in reports of research activities. There shall be no restraints that would impair faculty members’ ability to present subject matter in this context.” In addition, the College’s Strategic Plan 2006-2011 includes eight shared values, among them “A place where freedom of expression and civility are practiced, encouraged, and protected among all groups.” Muskegon Community College is committed to lifelong learning and the freedom of inquiry as a necessary component.

Lifelong Learning for Faculty and Other Employees

One type of lifelong learning occurs when individuals are urged to continue their formal education. It is apparent from the contracts for the faculty union, clerical union, custodial union, and the administrative/professional support staff that the College provides both financial and other support for continuing education, though unequally distributed, for those continuing their education. The varied support can be summarized in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Clerical Staff</th>
<th>Custodial Staff</th>
<th>Administrative Professional Support Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job-related unpaid leave</td>
<td>For educational, political or professional reasons; maximum of one year with contractual pay increment</td>
<td>For educational purposes; maximum of one year with contractual pay increment</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabbatical</td>
<td>Every five years, one year at ½ pay or one semester at full pay</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class reimbursement</td>
<td>One MCC class per year, tuition paid and one wellness related class per year, tuition paid</td>
<td>100% tuition, books and fees for MCC courses; 50% at other schools; maximum 24 hours per year</td>
<td>100% tuition paid for MCC courses, max 6 courses per year</td>
<td>Full time staff: 100% tuition, fees, and books paid for classes at MCC or other schools; part time staff: 50% for MCC classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-service seminars, workshops</td>
<td>Attendance supported</td>
<td>Allowed during work time if approved</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>Fees paid if occurs off-campus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For faculty, professional development provides an opportunity for lifelong learning, and they take advantage of these opportunities. The 2009 Faculty Survey listed more than forty different kinds of professional development activities attended by seventy-nine full-time instructors in the past five years (as described in detail in our analysis of Core Component 3b). Eighty-one percent of the full-time faculty attended off-campus workshops and seminars in the last three years, with half of the faculty attending three or more such activities within that time. Faculty noted in the survey that there was financial assistance from Muskegon Community College 67% of the time. On-campus professional development was attended by 88.6% of full-time faculty respondents within the last three years. This evidence of participation is reinforced by the faculty contract, which states in Section 20.2: “It shall be the goal of the Administration, the Board, and the Association to arrange for courses, workshops, conferences and programs designed to improve the quality of instruction and to obtain people of the highest qualifications to participate in the presentations of such programs. The Association shall aid in an effort to achieve maximum attendance and participation.”

Part-time instructors are welcome at professional development activities but not well supported. According to the same survey, 43% of adjunct faculty attended off-campus professional development within the last three years, with the College financially supporting a mere 6%. Thirty-five percent attended on-campus training within the last three years. This shows an eagerness for new learning opportunities by our adjuncts but insufficient financial incentives. It may be too much to expect them to work for a comparatively low wage yet finance their own professional development.

◆ **Lifelong Learning for All College Staff**

In the past, the College provided a variety of professional development opportunities for all staff members. A schedule of these sessions was published twice a year. These one- to two-hour workshops were taught by College staff and included technology-based subjects such as word processing, spreadsheet software, presentation software, and more personal subjects like stress reduction. It was one of the few opportunities where faculty, clerical, and other staff had to work together in a classroom setting. Staff development opportunities have been revitalized in the past year, but it will take some time for cross-functional participation to grow. Current issues like phone and Internet etiquette, handling job or financial stress, and getting along with co-workers could be addressed in such all-staff on-campus sessions.

◆ **Lifelong Learning for the Board of Trustees**

The *Board of Trustees Policy Manual* Section 2.01.16 (Trustee Education) states that “members are expected to participate in educational activities that enhance their ability to govern effectively as community college trustees and in articulating college services to the community.”

Our Board members follow this policy. Public minutes of the Board of Trustees meetings reflect some of the opportunities taken by Board members in professional development regarding topics of security, funding, strategic planning, innovations in education, and others. Most frequently cited in Board minutes was attendance at the Michigan Community College Association, the Trustee Institute, and the Association of Community College Trustees. In addition, two trustees attended the National Legislative Conference in Washington D.C. (January 2009). Upon their return from conferences, attendees give reports to their fellow Board members.
Day-long Trustee retreats are also held periodically at a local site to concentrate on specific issues. These are open to the public by law and vary in topic. Two recent themes have been the development of orientation materials for new Board members and the cost of attending conferences. Further discussions brought about development of a policy on Board travel. It is apparent that the Board is attempting to fulfill its mandate for professional development without overtaxing the budget.

◆ Lifelong Learning for Students

The College promotes lifelong learning in several ways. One avenue for developing lifelong learning is membership in a club. The variety of student clubs available and the College’s support should be applauded. Although most of the club members are students, activities are often open to the public. Students’ experiences in an organization can help them develop the life skills of organization, leadership, budgeting, and a respect for diversity.

Another way that students’ minds are expanded outside of the classroom is participating in the international awareness opportunities that abound at Muskegon Community College and have been discussed already: the Global Awareness Festival, the Model UN and the International Club, along with many others. Although it is difficult to measure the actual effect these international events have on students, they allow glimpses of the world with which most of the local students have had little experience.

The College hopes opportunities to attend cultural events develop into a lifetime habit. Some of these events include the following:

- the annual month-long Arts & Humanities Festival every October
- the College Writer’s Center lectures given by nationally known authors such as Frank McCourt, David Sedaris, and Sarah Jones
- College theatre and dance productions, art gallery shows, and library displays
- lectures, forums, and discussions sponsored by the on-campus Ethics Institute
- the College Lecture Series, in which speakers from around the region give free lectures (on various topics such as cosmology, history, and religion) open to the public

It is fairly obvious that the College offers or supports quite a variety of opportunities for student experiences outside of the classroom. In many students’ lives there is little time for anything outside of work, homework, and school. Many instructors encourage attendance at these events by making them class assignments or opportunities for extra credit. Exposure now to ideas outside of class can spark lifelong learning later when students have more discretionary time and finances. We do not have an assessment procedure that might verify our instincts.

◆ Lifelong Learning for the Community

Most of the lectures, presentations, and cultural events mentioned above are also open to the community. Publicity for the events is through the local newspapers, the College Web site, and posters throughout the community. In addition, extensive lifelong learning opportunities are offered to the entire community through the Continuing Education Department; details about these offerings are found in Core Components 5a and 5b.
The current economic situation has caused more members of the community to take a look at our high-quality job and skills training. Federal and state programs like the Trade Readjustment Act and No Worker Left Behind have brought in a group of older, recently unemployed students. They are seeing the importance of lifelong learning as they acquire skills to help them re-enter the job market.

◆ Scholarship and Research

Since teaching is the primary focus, Muskegon Community College faculty are not required to conduct research. Although teachers may conduct informal research to improve their classes, there are no data on faculty-conducted research available. However, the 2009 Faculty Survey did show that 76% of full-time faculty and 49% of adjunct faculty have required students to conduct research as part of all or some of the classes they teach. Participation in research activities (excluding actually conducting the research) was required by 55.7% of full-time and 28% of adjunct faculty. Research referred to here primarily consists of oral or written analysis and synthesis, using reputable published documents.

Historically, records of publications and other scholarly achievements of students and faculty in acquiring and applying knowledge have not been systematically collected and recognized. Unfortunately, there seem to be too few acknowledgements of personal achievements at any level, although there are attempts to recognize student academic excellence. The Dean’s List is published in the local newspaper; our television broadcasts graduation ceremonies; occasional articles appear on student and staff achievements in the Bay Window, the College’s newspaper; student art works are exhibited; the literary magazine is published; and announcements may appear in “Campus Connections.” Employees generally do not know when any of the staff achieves a certificate or degree or presents at a conference. This lack of communication may be that the rather new MCC Bulletin Board, available within the “Campus Connections,” relies on staff sending news items rather that those items being sought out. More recently, however, the Office of Community Relations has been active in soliciting news from all corners of campus, and we hope to see more publicity around student and staff accomplishments.

Strengths Related to Core Component 4a

- Mission documents clearly identify our goal to promote a life of learning
- Our commitment to freedom of inquiry is also supported in mission documents
- The College provides resources to support developing lifelong learning activities
- Employee groups take advantage of professional development opportunities
- Support for becoming lifelong learners is applied to all constituents, including the Board and the community
- Activities that promote a life of learning are diverse and abundant

Challenges Related to Core Component 4a

- Resources for supporting a life of learning are not equitably distributed among employee groups
- Planned recognition of academic achievement is needed
- We should consider training employee groups together when feasible
- More resources devoted to professional development should be considered
**Criterion Four ◆ Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge**

**Core Component 4b: The organization demonstrates that acquisition of a breadth of knowledge and skills and the exercise of intellectual inquiry are integral to its educational programs.**

**Summary of Core Component 4b**

In Core Component 3a, we attempted to assess how well our students achieve our learning goals. Here in Core Component 4b we will show why we believe our learning goals are good ones. Our goals for general education are appropriate and connected to the College’s Mission Statement, and the faculty knows what those goals are. General education goals can improve learning. Co-curricular activities play a helpful role in achieving learning goals. Our mission documents result in a curriculum that improves learning and meets the standards of Core Component 4b.

◆ **General Education Learning Goals Are Appropriate**

For defining our student learning goals, the most important mission documents are the “Purposes of General Education for the Associate in Science and Arts Degree” (ASA degree for liberal arts/transfer students) and the “Purposes of General Education for the Associate in Applied Science Degree” (AAS for occupational students). These statements are extensions of the College’s main mission commitments.

In 2001, the NCA evaluation team listed the following “challenge” in its report: “The College has not agreed on an overriding set of general education or basic core competencies which should be acquired by every educated person in the course of his or her education…”

Although we take this challenge seriously, it is the College’s position that two different sets of general education learning outcomes for our two degrees are appropriate given the differences in the purposes and benefits the degrees offer. A careful reading of the two purpose statements does reveal much overlap; all five of the applied science purposes are also found in the science and arts purposes. The College believes it is responsible for determining our curriculum and has done so.

In addition, because the transfer degree purpose statement is clearly longer and more detailed, and the number of general education credits required for graduation is higher, it may seem that general education is less important for the occupational programs. This is misleading. It is true that the ASA (liberal arts) general requirements are a minimum of 34 credits, whereas the general education requirements for the AAS (occupational) range from 20-22 credits. However, occupational programs have another category of requirements in addition to their general education and specific career program requirements. For all business degrees, the additional courses are called core requirements, and they are the same for all disciplines: Principles of Accounting I, Introduction to Business, and International Business, and they total an additional ten credits. Industrial Manufacturing course requirements for the AAS degree also have another degree requirement that they call “technical-related requirements.” The total number of these related requirement credits varies from 6 to 44 depending on the discipline; the required number of technical-related credits for an electronics degree, for example, is not the same as graphic design. This wide range probably needs to be more consistent.

Thus both degrees have general education requirements “intended to impart common knowledge, intellectual concepts, and attitudes that every educated person should possess” (from the AAS purpose statement), and designed to “prepare one not only for a career, but also for life” (from the ASA purpose statement). But the occupational programs also have requirements that we might say all business or manufacturing students should possess.
◆ **General Education Goals Connect to the Mission**

Both purpose statements define in more detail the broader commitments found in the College’s Mission Statement.

First, the ASA transfer degree requirements are intended to help the College succeed in five of the nine commitments found in the Mission; these goals for student learning are:

- **Commitment 1**: “Prepare students for successful transfer...”
- **Commitment 2**: “Prepare students in critical thinking... and long-term learning skills for the changing challenges of the future”
- **Commitment 4**: “Provide for the assessment and/or improvement of learning skills...”
- **Commitment 7**: “Enhance the general educational experiences necessary for persons to function as effective citizens”
- **Commitment 8**: “Create an atmosphere where diversity is acknowledged and encouraged”

Second, the AAS occupational degree requirements also stem from the College’s Mission Statement:

- **Commitment 3**: “Develop technical and vocational skills necessary...in the sophisticated workplace of the 21st century”
- **In addition**, our occupational faculty are often called upon to help the College fulfill **Commitment 6**: “Respond in rapid fashion to the ever-changing educational and training needs of...business and industry.”

◆ **Faculty Know General Education Goals for Transfer Students**

The purpose statement for the transfer degree is quite well-known by faculty, fairly frequently looked at by faculty, and still useful. Our 2009 Faculty Survey of full-time faculty reveals that 82% of liberal arts faculty are aware that there are six general abilities that define the ultimate purposes of general education requirements, and 96% after seeing the six abilities claim to “purposely attempt to develop” one or more in their classes, indicating that even if they are unaware of the statement, they are in agreement with it.

However, occupational instructors are less aware of the five purposes for general education for the AAS degree (66%), but again when shown the five learning objectives, 97% say they “purposely attempt to develop” these skills in their courses. Not surprisingly, adjuncts are not well aware of the purpose statement goals; only 42% claimed they knew what the six abilities were.

Our Board has limited experience with these degree requirements. Their policy manual outlines nine learning goals to be used in “curriculum development” (section 3.01.00); the nine are worthwhile and contain some overlap with our purpose statements, but they are very different in many ways. In other words, what our catalog says about our educational goals is significantly different from the policy manual. The Board’s statements are never brought up in decisions by the Instructional Affairs Council.
Criterion Four ♦ Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge

Our graduates seem to be quite aware of why we have general education requirements. Our winter 2009 survey of graduates shows that 88% agree or strongly agree that “The reasons for the required courses are clear to me,” and 93% agreed that “My teachers helped me see connections between one subject and another,” a major goal of our general education program.

Almost all faculty are occasionally reminded of the purpose statements in two situations. First, whenever liberal arts instructors propose a new course to our Instructional Affairs Council, the proposal form requires that they explain how the course will incorporate the aim of the six general abilities, whether or not it is intended to transfer (if so, evidence must be given from four-year schools), and under which of the nine areas of knowledge the course fits. Second, faculty completing discipline reviews must address how well the discipline promotes the general education goals.

Learning Goals Still Useful to Improve Learning

Despite the fact that the purpose statement for the liberal arts/transfer degree has now existed for nearly fourteen years, it is still useful (for reasons other than its role in discipline reviews and new course proposals) in guiding academic decisions. Two recent examples are a proposal to increase students’ critical reading skills (explained in Core Component 3a), and a push to improve students’ information literacy skills, discussed here.

The general increase of interest in information literacy in higher education prompted our assessment coordinator, who also is nominally the general education coordinator, to take another good look at our liberal arts general education requirements as found in the purpose statement. Two problems emerged: First, the College is still using “Basic Computer Skills” as a required foundational skill for graduation. In addition, the Board Policy Manual still has “Developing Basic Computer Literacy” as a desired academic policy. It appears to be an unnecessary requirement since many of our students come to us with basic skills, or they voluntarily enroll in a Computer Information Systems class if their skills are weak. Second, our purpose statement includes nine areas of knowledge under which all required courses fall, with one big exception: No courses are required for area of knowledge nine, “The principles of technology and its impact on society.”

Rather than add a new course or courses to our requirements, the Instructional Affairs Council appointed a subcommittee to look at other options. A survey of faculty indicated that a majority required some kind of research project in their classes, and virtually all of those instructors spent class time teaching research. To make it more likely that many required classes would have an information literacy component, the committee created modules that take the student step by step through the research process. All instructors can assign students to use them. The English Department and some other volunteers tested the modules in fall 2009 and as of winter 2010, all six modules are completed and available to all faculty.

A final use of the liberal arts degree purpose statement is evidenced in the College’s choice of the Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress (MAPP) test to help measure general education. As explained in Core Component 3a, the College has had very limited success in using MAPP, but continues to make plans that may result in further MAPP usage. Despite thousands of dollars spent with limited payback, our efforts show a commitment to constantly evaluate the effectiveness of our general education purposes.
The Role of Co-Curricular Activities

In addition to course requirements to develop desired general education outcomes, the College also fosters co-curricular activities that are connected to our curriculum, such as the German exchange program and participation in the model United Nations program. These experiential learning opportunities bolster what goes on the classroom and are discussed elsewhere in Core Component 3a.

The College also encourages and supports financially the activities of many clubs on campus. Just as the College is guided by its mission statements, clubs all have a mission or purpose statement and a constitution. Many clubs are directly connected to a specific aspect of our curriculum: art, philosophy, geography, international, teachers of tomorrow, computing and technology, and so forth. Some are related to a portion of our mission statement. For example, the Black Student Alliance, Gay/Straight Alliance, and Hispanic Student Organization help encourage diversity on campus. Some are more for fun, like hockey and amateur film; others build character, like Christian fellowship, honors society, and sociology. All help create a collegiate atmosphere on a commuter campus.

Although our general education purposes are useful, we could do better at systematically reviewing our general education learning goals. The story of our attempts to use the MAPP test for regular review and the difficulties of doing so are found in the analysis of Core Component 3a. Also the assessment coordinator annually creates an “Assessment Report Card” that includes our attempts to improve general education through assessment and sets goals for the coming academic year. As described in Core Component 3a, the College has adopted a six-year plan to improve students’ critical thinking abilities; if we stick to the plan, regular evaluation will take place.

The creation of the Academic Master Plan is helpful since it requires yearly updates from every academic area including general education. Finally, the hiring of an institutional researcher will help create regular review; a most recent example is our joining the National Student Clearinghouse, resulting in our first successful survey of former students in ten years, including their perceptions of our general education goals. Processes are also improving to make regular evaluation more likely. In the past, different individuals could get assessment data from a variety of people and offices, and personal relationships often determined whether something was done. We now are centralizing all institutional data in the research office. We do evaluate our learning goals, but we need to do so more regularly and effectively.

Strengths Related to Core Component 4b

- The purpose statements for general education are clear and specific, calling for a combination of both subject matter and skills
- The purposes are seen as mission documents directly connected to the broader Mission Statement of the College
- Liberal arts full-time faculty and graduating students seem well aware of our learning goals
- The purpose statements are useful in guiding our assessment activities, in keeping our goals in front of students and faculty, and in making changes, at times, to our curriculum

Challenges Related to Core Component 4b

- Some faculty have limited knowledge of general education goals
- Portions of our purpose statements help guide relatively small decisions, but major innovations and improved evaluation of teaching and student learning have rarely occurred
- Systematic evaluation of general education needs improvement
Core Component 4c: The organization assesses the usefulness of its curricula to students who will live and work in a global, diverse, and technological society.

Summary of Core Component 4c

Muskegon Community College assesses current curriculum with an eye to the future world of technology, diversity, and global interaction. We attempt to define expected outcomes and evaluate their usefulness. Internally, several methods of evaluation are used; external review comes from our advisory committees. We attempt to measure student learning for this component primarily when students graduate and/or transfer. Since the College also has faculty with high expectations, and we provide co-curricular opportunities for social responsibility and global awareness, we believe the College accomplishes the aims of Core Component 4c.

◆ The College’s Expected Learning Goals and Outcomes

Muskegon Community College’s Mission Statement directly addresses the College’s role in preparing students for the future. There is a commitment to “prepare students in critical thinking, communication and long-term learning skills for the changing challenges of the future,” to “develop technical and vocational skills necessary to enter and/or advance in the technologically sophisticated workplace of the 21st century”, and to “respond in a rapid fashion to the ever-changing educational and training needs of local and regional business and industry.”

We believe that a sound general education program in the liberal arts helps prepare students for the future by fostering skills and knowledge that are always important for any learner. This commitment is reflected in the general education requirements for the Associate in Science and Arts (ASA) degree, which includes nine areas of knowledge. Essentially, all nine areas have some content related to preparation of future citizens. By increased understanding of the nine areas of knowledge in the ASA degree requirements, a student can use that knowledge to put future developments in context.

◆ Internal Program Reviews

Muskegon Community College identifies three programs: the Liberal Arts/Transfer program, the Occupational program, and the Learning Skills program. Each program is reviewed by internal processes. A more extensive analysis of these processes in found in Core Component 3a, but a brief summary is described here.

The Liberal Arts program, using guidelines created by the assessment committee, underwent an extensive review beginning in 2004-2005; this review was partly in response to the evaluators of the last team visit who suggested in their final report that “The College should establish program and department-level goals for the review of the transfer program.” This process was completed in fall 2006.

Then the assessment committee created clear guidelines to evaluate liberal arts disciplines, showing faculty how to go about the process of seeking input from students, fellow instructors on campus, and colleagues from other institutions. We took our cue from the occupational programs’ established evaluation process called Self Study Evaluation of Occupational Programs (SSEOP) which evaluates what we again call disciplines, such as graphic design, respiratory therapy,
machining and so forth. The first liberal arts discipline review was submitted fall 2003. They are still trickling in: of thirty disciplines identified, sixteen are complete, eleven are started but not done, and three have not started.

The assessment committee made plans to create two more overall evaluations, one for the occupational program and one for learning skills. Then a new president came on board and called for the creation of several planning groups, and within a year, evaluations of all three programs were incorporated into the Academic Master Plan.

Of the five councils mentioned in the Board of Trustees Policy Manual, two (Instructional Affairs Council and Information Technology Council) are directly related to facilitating reviews of courses and programs and assuring that current technology is available to educate students. The Instructional Affairs Council (IAC) reviews curriculum issues, new and revised courses, and program proposals usually submitted by the faculty. The requirements for approval by IAC are quite strict. For example, each new course must be submitted via the New Course Proposal Form. How a new course fits into the previously mentioned general education requirements must be clearly stated. Also, transferability to institutions commonly attended by our students is required before approval.

The relatively new Information Technology Council meets once a month and involves representatives from many areas of the College. Among its responsibilities are overseeing additions and upgrades in both instructional and administrative hardware and software, and setting College-wide policies for technology use. This group is committed to keeping the College technologically current.

Our current efforts to create a new strategic plan and a campus master plan provide other opportunities for internal evaluation.

◆ External Review of Curriculum

Most of the Associate in Applied Science degree programs have community advisory committees to help the faculty evaluate the currency of the curriculum and the usefulness of the skills that students acquire. These committees are primarily made up of local business people and employers who are directly involved in advising or hiring people with related skills. Each committee is mandated to meet at least once a year, but difficulties in arranging common meeting times for off-campus members have been a problem.

When advisory committees do meet, common points of discussion are any current skill deficiencies among our students (as perceived by current employers), or skills the committee sees as needed in the future. West Michigan has had a strong history and presence in the manufacturing and practical technologies areas (for example, welding, auto repair, casting, and numerical control), with community leaders on the constant lookout for new areas where jobs can be fostered (such as alternative energy). This interaction between College faculty and community leaders has been helpful in providing ideas for new and revised programs as well as creating justification for their implementation. The faculty takes the advice of the advisory committees very seriously. As a point of interest, the “Liberal Arts/Transfer Program Review” suggested that advisory committees be formed for transfer programs as well.
Preparing Students for the Near Future

Many of our graduates transfer to other institutions to pursue bachelor’s degrees. Most transfer students, 83% of those students responding to our survey, do not intend to graduate before leaving Muskegon Community College. Although there is no systematic way of evaluating our students’ success at transfer institutions, some colleges and universities do report comparative grade point averages. These reports are still sporadic and garnered from only a few institutions. They do, however, indicate that MCC transfer students do about as well other community college transfers and as well as native students at four-year schools. In 2009, the College added Degree Verify to its National Student Clearinghouse membership, which will provide more information on transfer students’ performance.

Results of these reports are summarized in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution – Year Information Provided</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grand Valley State University</td>
<td>2.98 GPA for MCC transfers compared to 2.9 GPA for all transfers after first semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2007</td>
<td>2.94 GPA for MCC transfers compared to 2.92 GPA for all transfers after two semesters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan State University – 2007</td>
<td>40% - 55% of MCC transfers have GPAs about equal to native MSU students depending on year of study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Michigan University</td>
<td>2.95 GPA for MCC transfers compared to 3.01 for all transfers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2007</td>
<td>2.89 for native WMU students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferris State University</td>
<td>3.16 GPA for MCC transfers compared to 3.15 for all transfers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2007</td>
<td>3.06 for native FSU students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to grade point averages, the College is interested in the way students think about us after they have gone elsewhere. As reported before, there have been limited and infrequent surveys of graduates and/or transfer students and their opinions on their educational experiences here. The latest survey, done in 2009, does address some of the issues of how the College compares to the transfer schools. The response rate for this survey was acceptable, better than 10%, but results were not always encouraging.

It would be beneficial to faculty and administration to not only see this type of survey done on a more regular basis, but also to search out and include former students from several years back and students who never intended to transfer. If we received a good response, this would allow us to look more closely at any patterns of attitude changes, and to see how former students view the College once they have earned their baccalaureate degree and have been working.

Faculty Expectations for Students

It is natural that faculty expect students to master required knowledge. In general, faculty perceptions of standards are high, and pressure to reduce those standards is low. The results of the 2009 Faculty Survey show that 86% of full-time faculty and 91% of adjuncts agree with the statement “Academic standards are equal for all students.” In addition, 92% of full-time faculty and 98% of adjuncts agree that “Our academic standards are consistent with the academic rigor of our transfer institutions.” The adjunct view is important because many have taught at other colleges and universities in West Michigan.
The rise in the number of online and hybrid courses shows the faculty’s willingness to use current technology to provide student instruction. There is also an increase in the use of social networking tools as part of both traditional and online/hybrid classes. Examples include developing class or student blogs, using texting and Twitter for communication, creating Camtasia-based or other videos for class, requiring use of digital pens in the classroom, posting of class projects on YouTube, and holding online office hours with the help of software like Skype and Jing. Actual data on this usage are not available, but such technology usage should be included in the next faculty survey. More specific questions could have been included in the survey to see if the faculty believes students are being prepared for today’s world.

◆ Opportunities That Promote Social Responsibility

Several student organizations show an awareness of social responsibility. The Phi Theta Kappa honors society is primarily a service organization. The International Affairs Organization has had small but active participation in global learning situations like the Model UN for over seven years. The Student Government Association has also sponsored a variety of activities including blood drives, as well as holiday collections of food and clothing for the needy. The Sociology Club organized an extensive anti-drug use survey and campaign. Many other campus organizations run service-oriented food or clothing drives, especially during the holiday season.

Strengths Related to Core Component 4c

• Despite the limited number of discipline reviews, most departments conduct regular informal reviews
• The occupational areas have a strong commitment to using advisory committees
• The Instructional Affairs Council actively assures high standards for new classes and programs
• The Information Technology Council seeks ways to keep students, faculty, and staff apprised of new technological software and hardware

Challenges Related to Core Component 4c

• Discipline reviews are not always completed or updated on a regular basis
• We need more regular and detailed surveys
• There is little dissemination of the results of existing surveys of former students
• The establishment of liaisons to transfer institutions could provide more information about how our graduates perform
**Core Component 4d: The organization provides support to ensure that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.**

**Summary of Core Component 4d**
Muskegon Community College offers a variety of physical learning environments (demonstrated in Core Component 3c) and channels appropriate resources to support these places of learning (demonstrated in Core Component 3d). In this section, we will show that we also offer academic and student support services to encourage learning and retention. We also encourage ethical behavior in ourselves and in our students. Through a variety of services and processes, the College ensures that all members of the College community have a supportive environment for learning, discovering and applying knowledge in many ways. Therefore, we exhibit the qualities expressed in Core Component 4d.

**◆ Our Mission Focuses on Supporting Student Learning**

We have a strong commitment to help students be successful, as defined by each student, and our mission reflects these values, specifically statements four and nine.

“**MCC is committed to:**

4. “Provide for the assessment and/or improvement of learning skills and attitudes necessary for a successful educational experience,” [and]

9. “Provide comprehensive student services that are conducive to student learning and satisfaction in all facets of the college experience and appropriate to an open door community college.”

In addition, the assessment committee identifies student learning skills as one of our three major programs at the College. The following sections will illustrate how our commitments and practices focus on student success.

**◆ Academic and Student Support Services**

The rationale for all of the College support programs, from academic support to student services, is to provide students with the help necessary for them to make it through College and beyond.

First and foremost, the College offers services that support student learning. These services, all covered in detail in other parts of this report, include:

- **Comprehensive academic advising**
- **Testing of new students**
- **Library information literacy instruction**
- **Individualized instruction in the College Success Center**
- **A variety of tutoring options**
- **Services, materials, and resources for special populations**

In addition to academic assistance, the College provides a range of student services that contribute to students’ overall success. These services are housed in the new student One-Stop. Because all of
the student services are now housed in one central area, students can conceivably benefit from all of these services with only one trip to the College.

While the student services side of the College may seem to have little to do with academic success, direct correlations between seeing a counselor, or attending orientation, and student persistence suggest otherwise. How counselors help students succeed academically is explained further in Core Component 3c.

**Integrity of Research Practices**

The College has policies and procedures in place that ensure ethical conduct in the kinds of research that are suitable and relevant to community college students. Since there are no formal, original research requirements for faculty, there are no formal research policies. Several instructors have conducted research for their own benefit for additional higher education degrees or for purposes related to their disciplines. The MCC Faculty Association maintains its own “Statement of Professional Ethics,” last revised April 2006. This statement helps ensure that all faculty members actively uphold ethical conduct in their instructional activities.

Regarding student research, in January 2008 the assessment committee proposed an information literacy subcommittee to look at additional information literacy instruction. The committee used the American Library Association’s “Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education” to describe the College’s description of an information-literate student. This definition in part says a student should understand “the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information and access and use information ethically and legally.” While the College has adopted this information literacy initiative, it was determined that a sufficient number of courses addressed information literacy skills and no new course was needed. Instead, the committee has created information literacy modules that include instruction in the ethical use of information.

The College includes its Academic Integrity Policy in the student handbook and faculty include it in their syllabi, SafeAssign is available to faculty to detect plagiarism, and the College formed a distance education integrity committee. These policies and practices, in addition to completion of the information literacy initiative, show that the College wants to ensure that students and faculty adhere to specific ethics and integrity policies regarding research and instructional activities.

While the College does have many devices in place to ensure academic integrity, ethical research, and proper instructional practices, these efforts can always be improved. In our faculty survey responses, many stated that small classroom size fosters cheating opportunities. Perhaps proper classroom assignments and more efficient classroom arrangements should be explored. While faculty members are not required to conduct formal research, a research policy should be in place for those who do research for their own benefit.

**Intellectual Property Rights**

Muskegon Community College has created, disseminated, and enforced clear policies involving intellectual property rights as evidenced by the master agreement between the MCC Faculty Association and the Board of Trustees. The College believes section 19.2 of the master agreement is satisfactory in meeting the needs of the College as it specifically outlines the definitions of
“intellectual property rights” and the conditions under which ownership occurs (pages 56 and 57). Any conflicts between the faculty and administration can and will be mediated by this language. To date there have been no challenges to this contractual language. This is a testament to the quality of the language and the level of freedom provided by the College to its faculty in developing course materials that benefit student learning.

Currently the student handbook makes no mention of student ownership of materials they have created. It is understood, however, that work created by a student to fulfill course requirements remains the property of the student. Aside from examinations, all student work is returned. While the lack of a clearly outlined policy on student intellectual property has not been an issue, the College may want to consider creating a specific policy for publication in the student handbook.

**Strengths Related to Core Component 4d**

- The College provides academic support services directly in line with our mission statements
- College student support services are more than adequate
- Contractual language between faculty and the Board clearly states standards for intellectual property rights
- Academic integrity policies are clear and published in the Board Policy Manual, the Faculty Master Agreement, the handbook for students, and in all course syllabi

**Challenges Related to Core Component 4d**

- The College may want to create a specific intellectual property rights policy for publication in the student handbook
- Since small classroom size may foster cheating opportunities, perhaps proper classroom assignments and more efficient classroom arrangements should be explored
- While faculty members are not required to conduct formal research, a research policy should be in place for those who do research for their own benefit
CRITERION FIVE • *Engagement and Service*

As called for by its mission, Muskegon Community College identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways both value.
CRITERION FIVE ◆ Engagement and Service

Introduction to Criterion Five

In the analysis that follows, we will look at Muskegon Community College and the community to which it is connected. We will see that the College uses a variety of fairly effective ways to ascertain the needs of people in our service area. One of our most important services is to train people who are underemployed or unemployed. Training also responds to the needs of local businesses and industry. We will take a look at how the College plans its programs for the diverse community in which we live. We will examine the College’s varied partnerships with area school districts and institutions of higher learning, as well as collaborative ventures with other organizations interested in education. Finally, we will see how our constituents help us evaluate our programs and services, and how they come to our open campus for a variety of activities. All in all, the College has strong and beneficial ties with our community showing that the College meets Criterion Five.

Core Component 5a: The organization learns from the constituencies it serves and analyzes its capacity to serve their needs and expectations.

Summary of Core Component 5a
Muskegon Community College’s Mission Statement articulates our perceptions, based on decades of experience, of the varied educational needs of the community we serve. In addition, we actively pursue input from the constituents in our community with attention to and recognition of their diversity, and attention to the importance of maintaining connections with these external constituents. We ourselves benefit at times from identifying the needs of our community. Our most challenging service to the community is to train people who are unemployed or underemployed. We also serve local business and industry, offering customized training for those who are employed. Overall, the College learns from its various constituents about community needs and has the capacity and commitment to serve them, thus meeting the standards of Core Component 5a.

◆ Our Mission Statement’s Commitment to Our Community

The Muskegon Community College Mission Statement recognizes that our constituents include people with a wide array of educational needs. If we look at sheer numbers, the two largest groups are credit-earning students planning to transfer elsewhere, and students who don’t usually go on to another college, but rather gain employment skills and go to work. But the College also serves a large and diverse group of what we might call external constituents in the community. Two of our nine mission statement commitments in particular target our external constituents: first, commitment number five says the College “is committed to meet the unique educational, cultural, and societal needs in the community through special courses, seminars, and exhibits”; and commitment number six says we are here in part to “respond in a rapid fashion to the ever-changing educational and training needs of local and regional business and industry.” The wide range of degree and certificate programs, outreach programs, continuing education offerings, and specially designed workshops tailored to meet the needs of the local business community demonstrate the College’s commitment to its mission.

◆ Identifying Our Community’s Needs in Various Ways

On a formal level, it would be better to describe the College’s environmental scanning as episodic rather than periodic. We are making plans to address this weakness with the recent creation and
satisfaction surveys are in the resource room.

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staffing of a new community relations office. So far, one result of this new office is a substantially greater number of press releases and other announcements about events at the College. The office is also forming a plan to analyze the effectiveness of these communications to the public.

Community members have been invited, and some have accepted, to help the College in developing new strategic, academic, and facilities plans. The campus facilities plan is being developed in conjunction with Tower Pinkster Titus Associates, a local architecture firm.

To assure our general Mission Statement commitments truly reflect community needs and wants, the College does occasionally seek input from external surveys (e.g., a Community Health Survey and a Muskegon Area Transit System survey, which were conducted by external organizations). Internally, virtually everyone who takes a continuing education course, participates in customized training, or attends an event provides feedback to the College via some kind of survey.

Advisory committees for occupational programs, as indicated earlier, are evidence of community involvement and result in very specific suggestions about how the College can better serve local training needs. In addition, faculty and staff participate in less formal meetings and discussions to learn from our constituencies while conducting their daily business, attending community meetings, or serving on community agency boards. Our 2009 Faculty Survey asked, “Do you, as an individual, consult or network with any outside groups, agencies or organizations?” We found 62% said “yes.” Additionally, dozens of specific examples were given by the faculty when asked if they have fostered partnerships with various organizations and how those partnerships “translate into better learning for your students.”

The Community’s Response to the College

Public attendance may be the most obvious evidence that the College is correctly identifying and meeting community needs. If people come to what we offer, we may assume our classes, workshops, and events are what they want. Historically, we have had strong community support. During the ten-year period ending in fall 2008, the College averaged nearly 185 community groups using the campus facilities with more than 30,000 people visiting the campus every year.

The College has sought ways to serve all of the community and has acted as sponsor or host to many activities and events such as Seniors Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, and Women of Accomplishment to celebrate the diversity of the campus and community in which we live.

These events have all been well attended and several have a long history within the community, attesting to the quality and popularity of the programs among the College’s constituents. In the last two years, however, enrollment in non-credit courses and conferences has declined, perhaps because of economic hard times.

Responding to the Community’s Employment Needs

Since the start of this self-study in winter 2008, economic conditions in the State of Michigan, and particularly in our service areas, have gone from bad to worse. These conditions have apparently affected enrollments in several ways.

The most obvious effect is the growth in the number of unemployed and underemployed nontraditional students seeking job training. Muskegon Community College has responded
strongly to this very great community need. The College benefits from a national program, the Trade Readjustment Act for workers whose jobs have been shipped overseas, and a successful State of Michigan program, No Worker Left Behind. Both programs provide financial assistance to the College to retrain workers. In spring 2010, approximately 700 students are funded from one or the other of these programs. The College is able to place some students in existing programs in allied health, business, and manufacturing; however, we have also made a great effort to create new, shorter-term certificate programs in these areas with the exception of allied health, where creating new options has lagged.

A significant number of older students lacks sufficient reading, writing, math, and computer skills, so the College uses existing courses in our College Success Center to increase those skills. With help from a private donation, Muskegon Community College has created the Richard and Ann Kraft Student Life and Alumni Center, which is very well received by non-traditional students. Staffing for the Center is, unfortunately, barely adequate. We also have no formal analysis of how many of these displaced workers finish a program of some kind and then find employment. The State itself is just beginning to look at this issue on a state-wide basis for its No Worker Left Behind program.

Muskegon Community College is also looking to the future. Recently, the region has pinned its hopes for an economic turnaround on a growing interest by industries in alternative energy production. A new high-tech green battery company plans to begin operating in the community in two years, and significant growth in solar and wind energy products and services are under serious consideration. The College will be ready to participate: A certificate program in wind and solar energy for residential and light commercial applications has been approved and over one hundred No Worker Left Behind students have expressed strong interest. In the near future, a biofuels certificate will be up for final approval.

While our regular transfer and occupational enrollments have increased to record levels, participation in community and continuing education has declined more than we expected when beginning our self-study. In the year 2006-2007, continuing education enrollment stood at 1886 students. By 2007-2008, enrollment dropped to 1600 enrollees. Finally, in the period 2008-2009, only 1153 were enrolled. Further analysis reveals that without two new online programs, the 2008-2009 enrollment would be only 874. The two online programs are both prepackaged commercial products, one delivered by Ed2go, which focuses on inexpensive short-term job skills training, and the other by Gatlin, which consists of more expensive and comprehensive training in a variety of occupations.

The only thing steady or increasing has been enrollment in job training classes. The continuing education courses offered on campus generally fall under two categories: first, personal development, such as conversational Spanish, yoga, and freelance writing; and second, employment skills such as dental Continuing Education Units, pharmacy technician, and builders licensing. The personal development course enrollment has declined some, perhaps because of reduced discretionary income. Courses for the unemployed, whether short-term skill development classes or those that lead to certification, such as EKG technician, have seen more stable enrollments.

Perhaps the lack of discretionary income affects businesses, companies and agencies as well. Fewer groups are using our conference and catering services, and fewer attend the events that are hosted. Usually well-attended programs, such as Hispanic Youth Day, have been cancelled for a variety of reasons.
Even some very successful programs such as the Professional Drivers License training, which has had a nearly 100% placement record over the last three years, has seen a big drop in students: 2007-2008 enrollment was 112, 2008-2009 was 77, and 2009-2010 will likely be smaller yet. It appears that jobs are becoming very scarce locally, and only those willing to leave the area are enrolling.

**Reaching Out to Local Employers**

In addition to assisting individual students with job training, the College has recognized the need to develop stronger ties with many local business and civic leaders regarding workforce development and specialized training. A respected component in the College’s outreach to our external constituencies in the business community is the Lakeshore Business and Industrial Service Center. This Center is the umbrella for five programs to serve the business community.

The Lakeshore Business Institute, the first of five programs, is a team of professional executives with expertise in business training. They provide consulting services and customized training to meet the needs of the business community. The institute learns about community needs from a number or business and industry organizations in the Muskegon, Newaygo, and Ottawa county service areas including local chambers of commerce.

The second program, Commercial Drivers License (CDL) training, which boasts a nearly 100% pass rate on the state CDL licensing exam, has recently teamed up with the Michigan Truck Safety Commission to expand the safety portion of this successful program. Recently the government employment office, Michigan Works of Muskegon County, agreed to pay for those attending the program. Previously, dozens of students had their tuition paid by a grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation. Despite these good things, enrollment, as noted above, has been in decline.

The third program, the West Michigan Regional Fire Training Center, is one of only seventeen programs in the State of Michigan. It is the only program operating on the west shore of the state that offers a Fire Science Associates Degree program, training in Fire Fighter I and II.

The fourth program of the Center is serving as a WorkKeys Service provider. The College offers all necessary sections for participants to earn a National Career Readiness Certificate. Finally, the Lakeshore Business and Industrial Service Center has begun to offer OSHA-related safety training for the maritime industry.

Overall, the Service Center since its inception has established many business relationships and provided training and workshops for a number of businesses that operate in Muskegon, Newaygo, and Ottawa counties.

**Strengths Related to Core Component 5a**

- *The College’s Mission Statement reflects a long-standing commitment to meeting the needs of all its constituents*
- *Our programming efforts and attempts to identify needs reflect that commitment*
- *In cooperation with others, the College has made significant efforts to serve the unemployed and underemployed*
- *The College’s community services can be beneficial to all partners*
Challenges Related to Core Component 5a

- We do not regularly conduct formal environmental scanning
- Our informal contacts with the community are probably very valuable, but there is no systematic plan to evaluate community feedback
- Available information demonstrates the community is well served by the College, but it is not clear how the College is being well served
- We must continue creating innovative options, such as Allied Health certificates, for students seeking job training
Core Component 5b: The organization has the capacity and commitment to engage with its identified constituencies and communities.

Summary of Core Component 5b
The College’s engagement with diverse community constituents is not simply left to chance. As we have shown many times throughout this document, we have developed many plans. Our plans have led to positive results, and planning structures are in place to ensure that planning will continue. It is encouraging to see a growth in student-led service to the community. Resources adequately support current community partnerships. Challenges exist as well, regarding how to increase student involvement in the community, how to expand programs that are working, and how to make organizational responsibility clearer. Overall, Muskegon Community College’s actions and commitments display the qualities found in Core Component 5b.

◆ Planning to Connect Communities with the College

Both short-term and long-term planning initiated by the College engages the active and ongoing participation of both external and internal constituents. Examples of external involvement include the youth career conferences and the thirteen occupational program advisory committees. In both of these examples, college faculty and staff serve as facilitators of the meetings where the committee members offer programming ideas and inform staff about occupational trends. Annually and more frequently in some cases, these advisory committees meet to provide ongoing support of our program planning.

The College’s structures and processes enable effective connections with its community constituents. An example of effective connections structurally is, again, our occupational program advisory committee system. Thirteen occupational programs maintain advisory committees. These advisory committees help ensure that the College is offering occupational programs that are relevant to the community, address current industry standards, meet workforce needs, and have appropriate facilities and equipment to properly prepare students for work. They take aim at these goals using a systematic process called the Self Study Evaluation of Occupational Programs.

We have a variety of other advisory committees that help us plan and implement such community events as Mayfest (our annual open house), the 8th Grade Career Fair, Senior Day, and Black Youth career conferences. Professional development programs such as the Administrative Professionals Day and the West Michigan Township Officials conferences are planned with the assistance of an advisory committee. Additionally, many of the Continuing Education offerings are planned with input from advisory committees.

The College is structurally organized to offer highly used conference services that connect the College and the community. Conference services are sought by the public to host weddings, proms, workshops, retreats, teleconferences, and staff development training. Additionally, the conference services staff plans short-term educational outreach programs that are attractive to professional organizations, business and industry, and the general public. Along with the Continuing Education Office, it offers a variety of programs that, in the words of mission commitment number two, “meet the unique educational, cultural and societal needs in the community through special courses, seminars and exhibits.”

Faculty and the administration, of course, plan with the community’s needs in mind. For example, planning to extend our library’s weekday and weekend business hours has helped increase the
visitor traffic volume and made things more convenient for students, especially those who work and take classes. With the opening of the Meijer Library, business hours increased from 69.5 (in 2005) to 81 (in 2009) hours per week. Also, since the library opened, the number of community guests using the library computers has swelled from 1,121 to 6,164, resulting in a monthly average increase from 100 guests pre-2006 to 500 guests in 2009.

The electronic reference resources available to students over the last four years have greatly increased, from 7,000 (pre-2006) to subscriptions to over 17,000 journals, magazines and newspapers, many online, containing millions of full-text articles, with the number of resources growing daily. Thus students have the potential to immediately and efficiently access information that previously would have been cumbersome and time-consuming, such as interlibrary loans. However, while these resources are readily available, the library staff feels they are underutilized as reference research tools by faculty in selected disciplines. The library reference staff has worked selectively with faculty to educate them on the value and richness of using electronic, as opposed to traditional paper bound, reference sources.

It is worth noting that the library reference staff has proven to be effective in connecting and interacting with Meijer Library patrons. During fall 2008, the annual reference survey was conducted for a one-week period to get a view of reference use. Over 92% of the library patrons were satisfied or very satisfied with their interaction with the reference librarians. The survey results served as an encouragement for the reference staff to be more proactive in interacting with the library patrons.

The library also serves the community by inviting charter schools and local high school English classes to use our library for research. Schools with small libraries benefit most, but all high school students using our resources experience a small introduction to college.

◆ Co-Curricular Programs of Mutual Benefit

In addition to academic services provided to the public through the library, the College has worked with different partners within the community to provide services to satisfy their needs. Sometimes the satisfaction is reciprocated. For example, the Education Department takes College students to local elementary schools to practice theories and concepts they have learned. These services are valued by the schools since many are operating with limited budget funds and minimal staff; meanwhile, our students get a valuable real life experience. In summer 2010, students will be working with young learners on a Native American reservation in South Dakota.

An additional mutually beneficial program involving local schools is the TRIO Upward Bound program, which is designed to assist qualified students during their high school years to successfully complete high school and to continue on to post-secondary education immediately thereafter. The Upward Bound program serves as a link between the College and Muskegon High School to provide services to the participating students and to expose them to the College campus.

In addition to the population targeted specifically by the Upward Bound grant, the College has worked with the Muskegon Opportunity (MO) Committee to decrease the dropout rate in area schools and to provide all area high school seniors an opportunity to continue their education after graduation. Members of MO, which includes many business, education, and civic organizations in the City of Muskegon, have developed strategies, actions, and activities to educate students, parents, and the community about preparing for higher education, including Muskegon Community College as their best option.
Local employers serving on advisory committees provide our instructors with information on the local job market and the skills that students need to find work. Those companies that are hiring are getting the kind of skilled employees they require.

The College also benefits from the opinions that local citizens offer as members of our planning groups, especially the strategic planning committee.

◆ Student Engagement with the Community

Not only do faculty, staff, and community leaders create co-curricular activities, but so do students. Student engagement and outreach with communities outside of the College has expanded quite dramatically over the past two years. Student clubs with a direct connection to a variety of academic disciplines, such as the Philosophy or Geography Clubs, now represent over 50% of the active student organizations. This growth was in part spurred by its inclusion as a goal in the College’s current Academic Master Plan and by the activism of the Director of Student Life. The list of co-curricular student organizations includes:

- Amateur Film Club
- Black Student Alliance
- Computing and Technology Club
- Gardening Club
- Geography Club
- Hockey Club
- Martial Arts Club
- Nature Club
- Respiratory Therapy Club
- Soccer Club
- Muskegon Scholars (S.T.E.M. Club)
- Student Nurses Club
- Vegetarian Educational Group
- Writing Club
- Art and Graphic Design Club
- Christian Fellowship Club
- Gaming Club
- Gay Straight Alliance
- Hispanic Student Organization
- International Student Club
- Motorsports Club
- Philosophy Club
- ROTARACT Club
- Sociology Club
- Student Government Association
- Teachers of Tomorrow’s Students
- Veteran Student Organization

The following list includes student groups in Academic Affairs (not overseen by Student Life): Bay Window student newspaper; International Affairs Organization; Phi Theta Kappa; and River Voices literary magazine.

Our campus has an active Student Government Association (SGA) and local chapter of the Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) Honor Society. Both of these student-managed organizations provide leadership opportunities and service to the community. On a regular basis, SGA co-sponsors blood drives with the Red Cross, and PTK has maintained an “adopt a highway” cleanup project.

Examples of the community outreach activities also include the Geography Club’s transportation study done with the encouragement of the County Transportation Department, and the Sociology Club’s Alcohol Awareness Conference, which was co-sponsored with the County Health Department. Also, periodic blood pressure clinics are sponsored by the student nurses. These outreach initiatives, although driven by the students, rely on the active advice and support of faculty and staff.
While we acknowledge the recent community activism of our student clubs and the educational value of that activism, we recognize that the participation level may not be significant when looking at the total student enrollment. Also, participation levels are cyclical; we continue to be challenged with how to maintain and increase student involvement.

While the Geography and Sociology Clubs provide good examples of students collaborating with the external community, the connection between the students and external communities is also evident in the fieldwork, clinical and internship experiences, and in the apprenticeships available to students. These experiences are most frequently available in the education, health sciences, business and industry, and technology fields of study. Our local preschool programs, hospitals, and clinics provide hands-on opportunities for our students and reap the benefits of having well prepared students to assist with their workloads. These student interns come from College programs that are certified by state and national organizations.

Similarly, Muskegon Community College is registered with the Michigan Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration as a provider of what is called “related instruction” for apprenticeship programs. Although the apprenticeship program is company driven, the College provides the required classroom experience. The College is the only approved related-instruction site in Muskegon County. We willingly and happily share students with our local industrial community. Between 2005 and 2008, over sixty successful apprenticeships have been completed with twenty-four different companies. These numbers would suggest that there is a need to expand these types of student connections with the community; however, the economic climate is such that we do not expect an increase in these practicum experiences.

While we appreciate the various ways our students connect with our external communities, we recognize that an important opportunity exists for us to expand opportunities through an organized service-learning program. There have been initial attempts to formalize such a program but they have not been sustained; staffing has been a major hurdle.

◆ College Resources for Community Engagement

The programs of engagement referenced above are provided adequate physical, financial, and human resource support. The support is evidenced by high facility usage, the hiring of staff to secure funds, the administrative support of volunteerism, and the allocation of funds to support community-based and college-initiated programs for youth.

An example of people and financial resources supporting effective programs of engagement is the College’s commitment to the Muskegon Opportunity Program. This program is a grassroots effort to identify financial resources to cover college tuition costs for all youth regardless of their economic background. Members of the College’s administrative and professional staff have spent many business hours working on this effort, and the College committed funds to assist with underwriting the cost of hiring staff to coordinate the continuing efforts. Similarly, the College since 1998 has committed staff and scholarship funds in support of Let Education Answer Dreams (LEAD) and Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR-UP) for high school graduates who chose to attend Muskegon Community College. Both of these programs were designed to assist inner-city public school students in graduating from high school and college.

Some of the College-initiated youth programs have included the Hispanic and Black Youth Career Conferences, the Walk and Talk Success Middle School Self-Esteem workshops, and the WINGS
talented and gifted program. All these programs require that the College dedicate time for staff to organize them, and provide the space and other in-kind services to host them.

The College in the last four years has allocated funds to hire professional staff, part of whose responsibilities is to write grant proposals and develop fundraising initiatives to provide services, facilities, and scholarships that engage our constituents and communities. A Director of Institutional Research and Development, and a Director of Community Relations have job responsibilities related to securing dollars that can be used to upgrade and expand some of our facilities such as the planetarium and physical education buildings. These facilities are highly used by our constituents, and no admission fees are charged for the planetarium or athletic events.

Institutional partnerships provide another example of how the College dedicates resources in support of effective programs of engagement. For more than fourteen years, the College has partnered with Grand Valley State, Western Michigan and Ferris State universities to share facilities, human resources and program offerings. Not only does the College provide custodial services for the Stevenson Center for Higher Education, but also conference planning staff and office space. Approximately $200,000 is expended by the College annually in support of the Stevenson Center partnerships, demonstrating again the College’s commitment of resources to its community partners.

**Strengths Related to Core Component 5b**

- Muskegon Community College does a good job of involving the community in its planning processes
- Plans have led to good results such as much greater community involvement in our library facilities
- Student participation in community service benefits both parties
- There are some student organizations centered on service-learning
- The College provides adequate resources for partnerships to continue and perhaps expand

**Challenges Related to Core Component 5b**

- We need to make stronger efforts to further encourage student service in the community and consider making service a degree requirement
- There is much room available to expand current community and college partnerships, such as the apprenticeship program
- We could have a more clear understanding of who is in charge of maintaining and expanding our myriad community programs
Core Component 5c: The organization demonstrates its responsiveness to those constituencies that depend on it for service.

Summary of Core Component 5c
Muskegon Community College’s collaborative ventures with institutions of higher education and with local school districts are probably among the most important ways the College connects with our current and potential students. These relationships help assure that students will have many options for success. We also pursue community relationships with other organizations, particularly those related to education. We are diligent about partnering with other groups who share our commitment to high ethical standards. Documenting the impact we have on the community is difficult. Another challenge to the College is finding sufficient staff to continue and grow our partnerships. We are also challenged with how best to inform students about transfer services. The number and quality of our existing relationships with the community, however, demonstrate we meet the standards of Core Component 5c.

◆ Partnerships with Other Colleges and Universities

Three higher education partners, Grand Valley State, Western Michigan, and Ferris State Universities not only share our facilities, primarily the James Stevenson Center for Higher Education, but they also co-sponsor programs and events with us. Two examples of joint ventures with these institutions are the Transfer Fair, a one-day event where students meet representatives from transfer colleges; and the Muskegon Partnership Program (MPP). The MPP program provides advising, registration, and financial assistance to eligible students planning to transfer to Grand Valley State University. Both programs were designed to facilitate the transition of Muskegon Community College students to the partner institutions.

Muskegon Community College does its part by meeting on a regular basis with the campus directors from the three institutions to evaluate existing course offerings and the Stevenson Center services, and to plan future programs and services for the students we share. A good recent example is a cooperative effort between Grand Valley State University (GVSU) and Muskegon Community College to offer a new liberal arts degree with an emphasis on leadership, preparing students in both business and non-profit organizations. Students will complete a full two years of work at Muskegon Community College before transferring to the university.

Additionally, the College has other transfer partnerships with institutions outside of West Michigan, namely, Ferris State University, Franklin University and Northwood University. These universities partner with the College to offer 2 + 2 and 3 + 1 bachelor degree options.

Regarding transfer policies, there are partnerships, people, services, and electronic resources available to facilitate the mobility of the College’s students. We have offered a Transfer Fair for students as noted above, and we have hosted departmental campus visits, most frequently between GVSU and College faculty. These annual sessions provide opportunities for GVSU officials to discuss changes in their academic programs and the impact of those changes on our transfer students. In 2009-2010, the student nurse club hosted departments from Ferris State University, Grand Valley State University, and Michigan State University regarding transfer to their baccalaureate nursing degrees. Also throughout the academic year, the College hosts admissions recruiters from many four-year colleges and universities. These occasions provide students the opportunity to collect transfer information needed to make well-informed decisions about transferring. Electronic resources include online transfer guides. We have a very capable counseling and advising staff to assist students with accessing transfer information electronically or during advising sessions.
In spite of the accessibility of transfer information, we are challenged with how best to inform students about transfer services. Suggestions for improvement include consistently noting transfer information on course syllabi, and by including all those syllabi on the College website. Also, we are challenged with how best to connect with students from our service area that attend Michigan four-year colleges and universities to inform them about our summer course offerings that would transfer back to their senior institution. Currently, we promote this program by advertising in college newspapers and by word of mouth. Growth in the summer session has grown significantly in the last two years.

We even partner with our neighbor and competitor Baker College, in that we annually cosponsor the College Goal Sunday Financial Aid Workshop with them. Our student government also has a contest with students from both institutions to see which college donates the most blood to the Red Cross.

◆ Partnerships with K-12 Systems

In addition to relationships with higher education institutions, we have a long history of collaborative ventures with our area school systems, including the Muskegon Area Intermediate School District (MAISD). For example, beginning in 2003, the College had an agreement with the MAISD related to the Career Technology Center (CTC) for high school students. The Center was built on property owned by the College, but the MAISD staff was responsible for the operation of the CTC. An agreement to sell the land to the Intermediate School District was consummated in spring 2009.

Furthermore, the College and the MAISD have co-sponsored the WINGS summer program for talented grade school youth for more than twenty-five years, demonstrating our long-term commitment to work with other educational institutions. Similar to our CTC agreement, the College has provided the facilities and served as the fiduciary for the WINGS program, while the MAISD staff handled the programming and enrollment process.

The College also has agreements with other area intermediate school districts, career technology centers and high schools in our broad service area to offer both articulated credit and direct credit opportunities for high school students. The articulated credit agreements allow high school students to receive college credit for selected career and technical courses. The students must complete six credits at the College before they receive their articulated credit. In 2009, there were seventy-three applicants. In addition, direct credit is available to future Muskegon Community College students where select technology courses are taught at the local educational facility by approved high school teachers.

In addition, dual enrollment policies make it easy for students still in high school to come to the College and take classes that fit their schedules. Enrollment in the last couple of years has been strong, including 269 students in winter 2010. In addition, some college courses are taught right in the high schools. These dual enrollment agreements are established with local school districts and intermediate school districts in Muskegon, Ottawa, Newaygo, and Allegan counties.

Other long-standing collaborative ventures with local school districts involve other college exposure opportunities for elementary, middle school and high school youth. Examples include A Day for Me at MCC, the 8th Grade Career Fair, West Michigan Science Challenge (offered for twenty-seven years), and the Hispanic and Black Youth Career Conferences. Events such as these introduce K-12 students to the College; our dual enrollment arrangements allow them to become college students.
These programs involve the active participation and leadership of College staff, and the result is added job responsibilities. This is one of the challenges we face with these collaborative efforts; we do not have sufficient staff dedicated to operating such programs. To address this, several individuals have been actively trying to influence the partner agencies and organizations to assume a greater role in planning and implementing these ventures.

◆ Other Organizations Concerned about Education

There are many examples that demonstrate that local leaders and organizations value our contributions to community based programs related to education. We are repeatedly sought after to serve as partners. The LEAD (Let Education Answer Dreams) projects, GEAR–UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) and Upward Bound partnerships with Muskegon Public Schools are good examples.

◆ Ethical Relationships

As described earlier, Muskegon Community College has numerous partnerships, and an assortment of contractual arrangements. Our partners are reputable organizations, institutions and businesses, and we are careful to only do business with such entities. Our educational partners and affiliates are accredited by and in good standing with state and national organizations such as the Higher Learning Commission and the National Junior College Athletic Association. The K-12 public, charter and private schools with which we partner are accredited and well-known institutions. Finally, the area hospitals where we have clinical agreements all have accreditation through the Joint Commission on Healthcare Organizations. As we pursue beneficial relationships with other educational groups, we do so in an ethical way.

Strengths Related to Core Component 5c

• MCC has strong partnerships with other colleges and universities, particularly those who occupy physical space right on our campus

• We also have mutually beneficial relationships with intermediate school districts, high schools, and career centers in our four-county service area

• Students planning to transfer are well served by counselors and other staff who use a wide variety of ways to provide accurate, up-to-date information

Challenges Related to Core Component 5c

• It is difficult to adequately staff the work needed to maintain and grow relationships we have with other educational institutions

• We need to develop more formal methods of evaluating our impact on other community programs and agencies
Core Component 5d: Internal and external constituencies value the services the organization provides.

Summary of Core Component 5d
Several things demonstrate that Muskegon Community College meets the standard of Core Component 5d. The College involves its constituents in evaluating the many community programs and services provided. These services are well-received, in particular, our workforce development opportunities and our professional licensing programs. We maintain a very open campus that is often visited and used by the public. In fact, many community members participate in the College’s activities. Despite all these good things, new evaluation procedures beyond surveys are necessary to more accurately gauge both community support and their needs.

Three Ways the Community Evaluates Muskegon Community College

The College involves its constituents in evaluating its community programs using mainly three ways to seek their input and feedback to improve services: administering surveys, inviting people to join committees, and gathering insights in informal relationships. As described in Core Component 3a concerning student assessment, all teachers in all our academic programs, liberal arts/transfer, occupational, and learning skills, are required to administer a student learning survey at the end of every course for students to evaluate the course content and instructional methods. Most surveys are course specific, meaning all English 101 instructors use the same survey, but it is not the same survey used in English 102. The College also surveys enrollees in Continuing Education courses, various events, and customized training. These survey instruments give the College valuable information that is often used to change course materials, offerings, and delivery methods. The Conference and Catering Services office collects large amounts of data and input from the constituents who use the campus facilities. Certainly more could be done to systematically gather and analyze this wealth of data produced by classroom surveys, particularly the academic course evaluations.

A second method to involve community members in the evaluation of college programming is by inviting them to join committees. This document has made several references to advisory boards for occupational programs and for many community events, and to membership in committees, for example, strategic planning.

Third, sometimes the most valuable information on community perceptions is given in informal settings, such as when a faculty or staff member is engaged in some community service and the topic of Muskegon Community College comes up. Simply being present in the community is seen as important; our President sets an example with his continual appearances ranging from the Chamber of Commerce to a Scrabble tournament for charity. Administration and staff often serve on boards of local state service agencies and non-profit organizations. The opinions of the business and industry sector are welcomed by the Lakeshore Business and Industrial Service Center at the College. Periodic meetings with leaders of the business community help to assess the programs and workshops that are provided by the College and to garner input for future offerings. These close partnerships allow the College to respond rapidly to address needs in the business community and to provide the types and quality of training that are desired to support the local business and industrial sector. Despite the usefulness of these informal encounters, more can and should be done to formalize the feedback mechanisms and to provide more quantifiable data justifying future programs and training.
◆ **Service Programs Are Well-Received**

The College faculty are very involved in giving of their time and talents to serve the local communities. The 2009 Faculty Survey revealed dozens of professional organizations that instructors belong to, and large numbers cited their networking with outside groups, agencies, or organizations. Their involvement covers a wide range of non-profit agencies, schools, and organizations that benefit from the hours of service, expertise, and money. Muskegon Community College is a strong giver to United Way, for example.

Other than the attendance at events and activities and the informal discussions with participants at these activities, it is difficult again to demonstrate that the activities are well-received by the communities served. Some new evaluation instruments are needed to provide the solid evidence that these activities are valued by the community.

Some activities, such as those by our Nursing Department, seem to be self-evidently good and well-received. Students are involved in significant service programs to the community including such things as clinics for blood pressure, hand washing, flu shots, and immunizations. Some programs have been in place for several years, including elder home safety inspections, which families love, and Head Start screening for programs that don’t have sufficient resources to do the screening themselves.

◆ **Workforce Development Activities**

The economic and workforce development programs provided by the College are sought after and valued by the community. The College has been able to implement several programs that offer extensive outreach services throughout the community and surrounding neighborhoods. As described in more detail in Core Component 5a, the College is extensively involved with the No Worker Left Behind and the Trade Readjustment Act programs to provide training for displaced or underemployed workers in the community. In addition, quality training programs for those who are employed are provided through the Lakeshore Business and Industrial Service Center, and the center is valued and sought after by the civic and business leaders in the area. The number of referrals and repeat business attest to the quality, value, and effectiveness of these programs.

◆ **Members of the Community Participate in College Activities**

The College provides many opportunities for the community to participate in College activities and co-curricular programs, almost all open to the public. One indicator of community involvement with the College is simply the number of people who set foot on the campus. During the ten-year period ending in fall 2008, the College averaged nearly 185 community groups using the campus facilities with more than 30,000 people visiting the campus every year. Although these numbers have been in some decline, we believe this decline is an indication of the economic downturn, not displeasure with the services we provide.

In addition to attendance, positive feedback received from participants through anecdotal remarks demonstrates that these programs are well received by the community. One example of community support is Mayfest, which is an annual carnival-style event that is put on in conjunction with the United Way of West Michigan and is supported by several business partners, such as the *Muskegon Chronicle* and Plumb’s grocery stores. The event is free to the public and includes games, rides and entertainment that have drawn large crowds for the past thirty years. The community as a
whole has been very supportive of Mayfest, which began as a way to draw the community to the campus and to give back to the community for being so supportive of the College.

The College hosts several annual events to serve the community including a Health Fair, Employment Fair, Criminal Justice Fair, Love In Action (a program to highlight and recognize community members who have given of themselves to support the community), and Taste of Tomorrow, which provides high school students and adults seeking further career training a glimpse of their future. The Taste of Tomorrow event focuses on technical careers and the careers deemed to be on the rise for the future, as well as highlighting the College’s general education, theater, and music programs. The good attendance and the anecdotal remarks by the participants speak to the value placed on these activities as well.

In addition to events, community members have many cultural performances from which to choose. The Fine Arts Department provides several activities open for community participation, including theatrical productions, the art gallery, and the Theatre on the Road program that takes campus productions to local community theaters for performances. Many of the theatrical productions and music programs are open for public audition and people from the community participate. These performances are also open to the public and approximately thirty percent of the audience at any performance is made up of community members.

The College supports and helps to facilitate the Leadership Muskegon program each year. This program involves members of the business and civic community who come together to learn leadership skills and complete a class project over the course of several months. The College works closely with many area businesses, industries, and civic agencies to provide facilitators for the program. The program is intended to build future leaders within the community and to foster leadership skills among the participants.

These varied programs, events, and activities are widely attended by members of the community and many members of the community actively engage in the production and delivery of these programs. These programs are very much a College and community collaboration.

◆ The Community Uses Our Facilities

Besides conferencing and catering, the College offers a variety of exceptional facilities that the community utilizes and values, as evidenced in the remarks collected through participant surveys. For example, the new Hendrik Meijer Library/Information Technology Center, according to its mission statement, “extends its services to the community and serves as a catalyst in the lifelong learning goals of the citizens of Muskegon County and the greater West Michigan area.” Since its opening in January 2006, the library has issued nearly 1,000 guest library cards to area patrons, public school students, as well as students of the university extension centers at the College.

Another excellent facility on campus is the Kasey Hartz Natural Area that provides a nature trail for simple enjoyment, but people can learn firsthand the interrelationships between the physical and biological aspects of the environment in which they live. It is visited yearly by numerous community groups for scheduled guided tours, as well as families and individuals for an enjoyable nature walk. Part of the area is wheelchair accessible, and handicapped parking is conveniently available. Over the past few years the nature trail has hosted visits from nearly 120 different groups.

Another outside activity is golf. University Park Golf Course is a public golf course owned by
Muskegon Community College. It has its own driving range, putting green, golf pro, and golf shop. The public course is used by the community for golf leagues and tournaments, as well as for scheduled events such as fundraisers.

The Carr-Fles Planetarium features free public showings two evenings each week and also offers eleven different special showings for organized groups and schools. The showings average twenty-six persons with a total count of over 4,000 attendees for each of the past three years.

The Muskegon Community College Observatory is located off campus and, while it was created mainly to complement the College’s astronomy program, it also serves as an additional resource for area recreational stargazers.

The College facilities are also widely used by community members, business and industry groups, and the local pre-K through 12th grade schools for special programs or events. These events are tracked by the campus Conference and Catering Services staff. As noted earlier, over 30,000 people visit the College annually.

**Licensed Professionals in the Community**

The College provides three programs designed to meet the continuing education needs of licensed professionals in the community. First, continuing education courses exist to meet the continued licensing requirements of the State of Michigan for workers in the skilled trades, such as builders, electricians, and plumbers. The College also works with the Muskegon Area Intermediate School District to provide for the training and licensing needs for the area Head Start programs and the staff who work in those programs.

The College also provides the opportunity for professionals to earn continuing education units (CEUs) that are crucial to their retention and promotion in their chosen fields, such as licensed childcare providers and dental workers. In addition, various professional development courses or seminars are offered in areas such as grant proposal writing and real estate.

The College sponsors professional growth events that may not receive CEU credit, but are valuable in their own right. These include the Technology to Teach Math Conference, the Muskegon Area Teachers of English (MATE) Conference, the annual Nursing Conference, and the Early Childhood Conference, which provides the training for workers in a day care facility. There are other opportunities that vary from year to year that allow those working in the education field to receive the training necessary for continuing certification in their area of expertise.

The College will continue to be a resource to provide the training and conferences that serve the needs for licensing and training of professionals in the area. The different departments and programs on campus work diligently to provide the most up to date and beneficial training for the students, business professionals, and community members who utilize the campus services for their continuing education needs.

**Strengths Related to Core Component 5d**

- *We seek and find community involvement when evaluating our community services*
- *The faculty and other employees are very involved in service programs*
- *Our widespread use of surveys shows a commitment to evaluation*
• The College is a leader in the community in providing training and workshops to address identified needs
• Our campus is used by the public in many ways
• We offer appropriate choices for professional licensing needs

Challenges Related to Core Component 5d
• Some new evaluation instruments are needed to provide the solid evidence that our programs and activities are well-received by the community
• The wealth of data from surveys is not systematically analyzed and therefore is of limited value
• More can and should be done with local business and industry to formalize the feedback mechanisms and provide more quantifiable data, thus justifying future programs and trainings
• Formal environmental scanning is done infrequently and there is currently no set location to find the information from the inquiries that have been done
• With the continued poor job situation in Michigan, Muskegon Community College has the added challenge of providing adequate training for the large numbers of unemployed
Summary of the Five Criteria and Request for Continued Accreditation

During our thoroughly researched self-study, Muskegon Community College has attempted to answer a simple question: Are the Higher Learning Commission’s descriptions of each criterion, and each core component, good descriptions of our institution? When the words accurately describe us, we have identified them as strengths; when they do not, we have called them challenges. We attempted to be very honest, so that the evaluation team will conclude that our overall report presents us as we really are. And by being honest, we can use the conclusions we have reached in this self-study to help improve Muskegon Community College.

Knowing our strengths will tell us what to continue doing. Knowing our challenges will give us directions to follow to initiate positive change. We look forward very much to the additional insights and advice of the evaluation team.

- Muskegon Community College has been continuously accredited since 1929. We believe our self-study, which followed the Program to Evaluate and Advance Quality guidelines, reveals that this status should continue. We have shown that the institution as a whole, and the assessment program in particular, has taken seriously the recommendations of the evaluation team in 2000.

- We have provided an accurate Institutional Snapshot which, along with our brief history, tells much about who we are and who our constituents are. We have demonstrated that we are in compliance with federal regulations.

- Most important, using our Mission Statement as a guide, we have carefully evaluated each of the twenty-one core components by considering all the examples of evidence suggested by the Higher Learning Commission. Our evidence shows that we are accomplishing each of the core components and by extension, that we have met the standards of the five criteria for accreditation.

- Muskegon Community College formally requests the Higher Learning Commission to grant the College continued institutional accreditation status.
FEDERAL COMPLIANCE

Muskegon Community College adheres to all of the federal requirements monitored by the Higher Learning Commission as prescribed by federal agencies such as the U.S. Department of Education. The College communicates its programs and costs accurately, follows its established policies, complies with state and federal laws, and offers curricula and services of the highest quality.
**Credits, Program Length and Tuition**

Muskegon Community College follows a semester schedule for its academic programs. In addition to fall and winter semesters of fifteen weeks, the College offers a ten-week summer term. Academic credit, as defined and approved by the Instructional Affairs Council and the Coordinating Council, is assigned to each course and published in the catalog, class schedule, and the WebAdvisor online student registration system. The State of Michigan requires a semester credit hour to be not less than 800 instructional minutes. At Muskegon Community College, each credit hour equates to 825 instructional minutes (55 minutes x 15 weeks = 825).

Program length is determined by the number of credits required for each degree. All Associate in Science and Arts (ASA) and Associate in Applied Science (AAS) degrees require at least 62 credits. A full-time student could complete an ASA or AAS degree in two years, provided the classes are available in the correct sequence for the student. The College also offers a variety of certificate programs, which range from the 12-credit Customer Service Specialist Certificate to the 39-credit Electronics Technology Certificate.

Tuition is based upon residency at the time of registration. To qualify as an in-county/in-district resident, a student must have lived within the confines of Muskegon County for six consecutive months prior to the first day of classes for any semester/session. Tuition is assessed by the number of weekly contact hours, that is, the number of hours per week a course meets. Tuition and fees are determined by the Muskegon Community College Board of Trustees and are accessible on the College Web site and in the class schedules. For the 2009-2010 academic year, tuition per contact hour is $72.25 for in-district students; $119 for out-of-district students; and $161.50 for out-of-state students. A $35 registration fee is charged for each semester registered. A $7-per-contact-hour technology fee is also charged. The College does not charge program- or course-specific differential tuition, but there may be lab fees assessed, depending on the class.

All twenty-eight Michigan community colleges set their tuition and fees independently. Some colleges charge by the credit hour, some by the contact hour. Some colleges apply separate registration, student services, and technology fees, and other do not. Although these factors make it difficult to compare across Michigan institutions, research done by Muskegon Community College shows that it is comparable in its annual cost of attendance, and in its program requirements, to other community colleges in the state.

**Institutional Records of Student Complaints**

The College encourages students with an instruction-related complaint to settle the matter with their instructor. Failing resolution with the instructor, the student should discuss the issue with the relevant department chair, and ultimately, the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs. If the issue isn’t resolved via this process, the student may bring a formal complaint to the Petitions Committee. This committee meets once a month and is composed of students, staff, and faculty members (as described in the student handbook). The Petitions Committee is empowered by the Board to take action in areas including tuition refunds, dismissal from the College, and grade changes. Official records of committee decisions are kept in the Office of Records and Registration. The committee hears an average of 100 petitions a year, most of which are requests to change a failing grade to “Withdrawal for Illness” and appeals for tuition refunds.

A student may file a non-instructional complaint when the student perceives that he or she has been treated unfairly or unjustly by a faculty member or other college employee with regard to discrimination or sexual harassment. These complaints are handled by the Executive Vice President of Administration.
Transfer of Credit
Muskegon Community College has posted guidelines on its Web site for transferring credits into the College. In spring 2010, transcripts are still evaluated on a case-by-case basis by staff in the Records and Registration office, and the process can take a month or more. Staff will only review official transcripts sent by mail, and credits must be earned from a regionally accredited institution. Only courses in which a student earned a grade of “C” or better will be considered for transfer credit, and the grade is not entered onto the official Muskegon Community College transcript or calculated in the cumulative grade point average. Time limits are also imposed on courses earned in certain subjects.

To provide information on course equivalencies to the public, the Michigan Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers sponsors the Michigan Transfer Network. The project creates a centralized Web-based system that allows any student who has completed a course at any Michigan college or university to find the equivalency for that course at any other Michigan college or university. Muskegon Community College is a member of the network, and information on courses received by the College and their equivalencies is on the site.

Verification of the Identity of Students in Distance Education
Muskegon Community College offers distance education courses and has processes in place to verify the identity of the students taking those courses. Student integrity is a primary concern of the College in both distance education and face-to-face class formats. The College’s Academic Integrity Policy is included in course syllabi:

“Muskegon Community College expects that all faculty and students will adhere to high standards of personal and academic honesty. This means that all academic work will be done by the student to whom it is assigned without unauthorized aid of any kind. Faculty members, for their part, will exercise care in the planning and supervision of academic work so that honest effort will be positively encouraged. Academic dishonesty consists of, but is not limited to:

“Cheating. Cheating is defined as using or attempting to use, giving or attempting to give, and obtaining or attempting to obtain, materials or information, including computer material pertaining to a quiz, examination, or other work that a student is expected to do alone.

“Plagiarism. Plagiarism is defined as the use of another’s words or ideas without acknowledgement.

“Penalties for violation of these standards of conduct may result in sanctions of up to and including suspension or expulsion from MCC.”

A student integrity subcommittee was established in July 2008 to make recommendations to the College at large regarding verification of student identity in distance education courses. The subcommittee polled other Michigan colleges as to what methods they were using and attended a webinar in 2009 that focused on distance education compliance with regard to the Higher Education Opportunity Act.

The subcommittee recommends and the College offers the following student identity verification methods to distance education faculty:

- **Unique login information for each student.** Students must log in each time they access their learning management system (i.e., Blackboard). When logging in, each student must use a unique username and password to gain access to Blackboard.
• **Physical proctoring of exams.** Faculty are encouraged to make use of a testing center that verifies student identity. MCC’s testing center provides this service for College faculty. In addition, the distance education testing policy requires that any student unable to travel to MCC’s testing center may request to use an acceptable alternate testing center.

• **Use of timed tests and randomized questions.** Distance education faculty members are encouraged to use timed tests and randomize the test questions.

• **SafeAssign.** This is an anti-plagiarism tool found within Blackboard. This tool helps educators identify unoriginal content in student work.

• **Other.** Faculty members are encouraged to learn their student’s “voice.” The following are recommendations to faculty when they are developing an online course:
  - Weekly discussion board assignments
  - Use of instant messaging software (e.g., Wimba Pronto), which is available to all faculty and students at MCC and which has microphone capability
  - Webcam usage
  - Test grades alone should not ensure passing of a course

◆ **Institutional Compliance with the Higher Education Reauthorization Act and Title IV**

Muskegon Community College maintains full compliance with the Title IV requirements of the Higher Education Reauthorization Act.

1. **General Program Responsibilities.** Muskegon Community College’s Financial Aid Office administers and monitors the following federal financial aid programs: Pell Grant Program; Direct Stafford Student Loan Program; Supplemental Education Opportunity Grant Program; and Work-Study Program. In addition, the office administers a variety of State of Michigan and other institutional grant and scholarship programs.

The Program Participation Agreement is the document that allows the College to participate in Title IV programs. The agreement is a listing of general requirements that the College must adhere to as a Title IV eligible school (such as reporting requirements and three-year audits). The most recent PPA was completed and approved in 2007, and the next submission is scheduled for December 2012.

Changes in the Eligibility and Certification Approval Report (ECAR) are reported to the U.S. Department of Education. These changes include: 1) new certificate programs for which students may receive aid; 2) personnel changes in the President, Associate Vice President for Financial Services, or Director of Financial Aid; and 3) new campuses with programs for which students may receive aid.

The Program Participation Agreement and the Eligibility and Certification Approval Report are completed by the Director of Financial Aid and signed by the President.
In 2006, the Financial Aid Office was audited by the State of Michigan Student Financial Services Bureau. The bureau conducted a review and performance audit of the College’s Federal Family Education Loan Program and State of Michigan student financial aid programs. The audit resulted in findings related to student consumer information, loan certification, and the return of Title IV funds. The College’s response to all of the findings satisfied the bureau that the corrective actions taken by Muskegon Community College satisfied the compliance requirements.

2. Financial Responsibility Requirements. The Department of Education has not identified concerns with the College’s financial ratios or audits with regard to its Title IV responsibilities. Based on the College’s 2008 Annual Institutional Data Update (AIDU), however, the Higher Learning Commission did notify the College of its concern regarding that year’s Composite Financial Indicator score. The score had been 1.8 in 2007 and dropped to 1.0 in 2008, causing the Commission’s concern. The latest AIDU in 2009 shows the CFI has increased to 3.2.

3. Student Loan Default Rates. Muskegon Community College’s student loan default rates have not caused a Department of Education review. The College’s Financial Aid Office offers online and in-person entrance and exit counseling regarding loans. The most recent available years’ default rates are shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FY2007</th>
<th>FY2006</th>
<th>FY2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Default Rate</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. in Default</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. in Repay</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Campus Crime Information and Related Disclosure of Consumer Information. Muskegon Community College is in full compliance with the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security and Campus Crime Statistics Act. Annual crime statistics are reported to the U.S. Department of Education and are published in the student handbook. “Your Safety, Your Health,” a publication that includes campus crime statistics, is posted on the College Web site. In 2008-2009, only one crime (burglary) was reported. A postcard is sent to employees every year with a link to the crime statistics online.

5. Satisfactory Academic Progress and Attendance Policies. To qualify for financial aid, a student must make satisfactory academic progress toward the completion of a degree program. This policy applies to all students who receive aid from any federal or state financial aid program, as well as students in other College programs that require satisfactory academic progress as a criterion for eligibility. This policy is separate from the College’s general probation/dismissal policy. The academic progress policy is published in the catalog and is posted on the financial aid section of the College Web site.

Expectations for attendance are addressed in the General Academic Policies section of the catalog. Excessive absences may lead to withdrawal from a course, but the instructor has discretion in defining “excessive” absences. If instructors do not take attendance into account when determining a student’s status in a course, they must maintain other consistent means of showing participation.

6. Contractual Relationships. Muskegon Community College has no contractual relationships with third-party entities that provide academic content in any degree program.
Federal Compliance

- **Institution’s Advertising and Recruitment Materials**
  Muskegon Community College takes steps to ensure that information about its programs, policies, and accreditation are available and accurate. The College catalog and marketing materials are overseen by the Office of Community Relations. The catalog is printed once a year and is reviewed prior to publication by academic departments and other appropriate College staff. The catalog is also published on the College Web site.

  Accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission is noted on the first page of the Catalog and is published on the Academic Affairs Office page of the Web site. The Higher Learning Commission’s address, phone number, and Web site URL are also posted in both locations.

- **Relationship with Other Accrediting Agencies and State Regulatory Bodies**
  Muskegon Community College also maintains professional accreditation for the Nursing and Respiratory Therapy programs. The Muskegon Community College Nursing program is approved by the Michigan Board of Nursing to provide a program of nursing education leading to the diploma in Practical Nursing and an Associate Degree in Nursing. It is accredited by the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission. The Respiratory Therapy program is fully accredited by the Committee on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs through the Committee on Accreditation for Respiratory Care, or CoARC.

  Information about Nursing and Respiratory Therapy accreditation is posted on the departments’ Web pages.

- **Public Notification of Comprehensive Evaluation Visit**
  By the time of the comprehensive visit, Muskegon Community College will have announced its institutional self-study and October 2010 visit using various media. The self-study has had a presence on the College Web site from the beginning of the process, and relevant articles have been published in the campus newsletter “Campus Connections” and the student newspaper The Bay Window. Notice of the comprehensive visit will be published on the College Web site, in The Muskegon Chronicle, and in targeted publications such as MiBiz and the Muskegon Tribune. Notice will include the purpose and dates of the visit, the College’s current accreditation status, and instructions on how the public can send written comments to the Commission regarding the College’s accreditation.
INSTITUTIONAL SNAPSHOT

Muskegon Community College
1. Student Demography Headcounts

A. Undergraduate Enrollment by Class Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Level</th>
<th>Fall 2008</th>
<th>Fall 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshman (&lt;31 Credits)</td>
<td>2660</td>
<td>3118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore (≥ 31 Credits)</td>
<td>2126</td>
<td>2026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>4786</td>
<td>5144</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Undergraduate Students by Degree-Seeking and Non-Degree-Seeking Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree-Seeking</th>
<th>Fall 2008</th>
<th>Fall 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>1017</td>
<td>1346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Degree-Seeking</strong></td>
<td>1277</td>
<td>1774</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Degree Seeking</th>
<th>Fall 2008</th>
<th>Fall 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>706</td>
<td>699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Non-Degree Seeking</strong></td>
<td>843</td>
<td>892</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. Graduate/Professional Students by Degree-Seeking and Non-Degree-Seeking Status

*Graduate data do not apply.*

D. Age Range of Undergraduate Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Fall 2008</th>
<th>Fall 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age 24 and under</td>
<td>2876</td>
<td>3137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 25 and older</td>
<td>1910</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>4786</td>
<td>5144</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E. Number of Credit-Seeking Students by Residency Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residency Status</th>
<th>Fall 2008</th>
<th>Fall 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-District</td>
<td>3307</td>
<td>3605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-District</td>
<td>1447</td>
<td>1512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-State</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-Country</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>4786</td>
<td>5144</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Student Recruitment and Admissions

A. Number of Applications, Admissions and Enrollments for Entering Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 2008</th>
<th>Fall 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Applied</td>
<td>Accepted/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshmen</td>
<td>2831</td>
<td>2782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readmits</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfers</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3178</td>
<td>3128</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Enrolled for fall or winter semester

B. Standardized Testing as a Condition for Admission

Muskegon Community College does not require standardized test scores for admission, as it is an open-door institution. However, students enrolling at MCC for the first time are required to complete COMPASS testing prior to registering for classes to determine writing, reading and mathematics levels. Scores are used by counselors to recommend the appropriate level course work. Students who supply ACT or high school Michigan Merit Examination scores may be exempted from testing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPASS Test or Sub-test</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Fall 2008</th>
<th>Fall 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of Students</td>
<td>Score</td>
<td>Number of Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Algebra</td>
<td>1-99</td>
<td>877</td>
<td>40.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algebra</td>
<td>1-99</td>
<td>671</td>
<td>36.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Algebra</td>
<td>1-99</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>42.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trigonometry</td>
<td>1-99</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>50.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>1-99</td>
<td>1526</td>
<td>78.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>1-99</td>
<td>1476</td>
<td>60.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

COMPASS is computer adaptive; thus, for mathematics testing, students automatically move into higher sub-tests as they answer questions correctly. A student’s final math score falls in the sub-test in which s/he has answered questions at their highest demonstrated skill level on the test.

3. Financial Assistance for Students

A. Percentage of Undergraduates Applying for Financial Aid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 2008</th>
<th>Fall 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number/Percentage of students applying for aid</td>
<td>3265</td>
<td>68.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Enrollment</td>
<td>4786</td>
<td>5144</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Percentage of Undergraduates Receiving Financial Aid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 2008</th>
<th>Fall 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number/Percentage of students receiving aid</td>
<td>2631</td>
<td>55.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Enrollment</td>
<td>4786</td>
<td>5144</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage of Students Receiving Aid by Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 2008</th>
<th>Fall 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loans</td>
<td>837</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Study</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarships/Grants</td>
<td>3032</td>
<td>63.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic/Merit-based Scholarships</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Enrollment</td>
<td>4786</td>
<td>5144</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Reduction primarily due to elimination of Michigan Merit/PROMISE Scholarships
C. Institutional Tuition Discount Rate (TDR)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FY 2007-2008</th>
<th>FY 2008-2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate TDR</td>
<td>32.97%</td>
<td>39.96%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Student Retention and Program Productivity

A. Percentage of First-Time, Full-Time Fall Entering Undergraduates Returning for Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 2007</th>
<th>Fall 2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># Entering Fall 2007</td>
<td># Returning Fall 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>996</td>
<td>478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-resident Alien</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1205</td>
<td>580</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Number of Students Who Earned Graduate or Professional Degrees

Muskegon Community College does not award graduate or professional degrees.

C. Number of Graduates by Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CIP Code Discipline</th>
<th>2007-08</th>
<th>2008-09</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture/Natural Resources (1, 3)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture/Engineering/Engineering Technology (4, 14, 15)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biological and Physical Sciences (26, 40, 41)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business (52)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications/Communication Technology/Fine Arts (9, 10, 50)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education/Library Science (13, 21, 25)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities/Interdisciplinary (5, 16, 23, 24, 30, 38, 39, 54)</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health (51)</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law (22)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics/Computer Science (11, 27)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Technology/Protective Services (29, 43)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Services/Consumer Services/Fitness (12, 19, 31)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology/Social Sciences and Services (42, 44, 45)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trades/Production/Transportation Health (46, 47, 48, 49)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>452</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D. Pass Rates for Undergraduate Students Sitting for Licensure Examinations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2007-08</th>
<th>2008-09</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attempted</td>
<td>Passed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal Justice – Law Enforcement</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing - LPN</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing - RN</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respiratory Therapy</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Faculty Demography

A. Headcount of Full-Time and Part-Time Faculty According to Highest Degree Earned

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree Level</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Full-Time Faculty</td>
<td>Part-Time Faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Headcount of Full-Time and Part-Time Faculty According to Race/Ethnicity and Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Full-Time Faculty</th>
<th>Fall 2007*</th>
<th>Fall 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>49</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part-Time Faculty</th>
<th>Fall 2007*</th>
<th>Fall 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>85</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*HR IPEDS surveys are conducted in odd-numbered years.

C. Number of Full-Time and Part-Time Faculty According to Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Codes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CIP Code Discipline</th>
<th>Full-Time</th>
<th>Part-Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture/Natural Resources (1, 3)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture/Engineering/Engineering Technology (4, 14, 15)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biological and Physical Sciences (26, 40, 41)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business (52)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications/Communication Technology/Fine Arts (9, 10, 50)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education/Library Science (13, 21, 25)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health (51)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities/Interdisciplinary (5, 16, 23, 24, 30, 38, 39, 54)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law (22)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics/Computer Science (11, 27)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Technology/Protective Services (29, 43)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Services/Consumer Services/Fitness (12, 19, 31)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology/Social Sciences and Services (42, 44, 45)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trades/Production/Transportation Health (46, 47, 48, 49)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Availability of Instructional Resources and Information Technology

Information Technology Resources

MCC is a completely wireless campus, including Gerber Lounge, Bookside Bistro, Cyber Café, Collegiate Hall, Jayhawk Grill, Student Union, Library/Information Technology building and Stevenson Center for Higher Education.

Computers Available:
Student academic labs and classrooms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of PCs Available</th>
<th>677</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Macs Available</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Open Lab Usage:
LIT Information Commons Lab

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Usage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>3,641</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>3,264 (Reduction due to elimination of Saturday access)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Systems Administration

The Systems Administration group ensures availability, performance, archival, and security of MCC’s enterprise academic and administrative systems.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Systems Administration Staff (full-time)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Chief Information Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Lab Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 User Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Network Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Administrative Applications Support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The College began a comprehensive strategy for network, server, and application monitoring in 2005. Processor, disk space, and memory are measured for each server to make sure they are within acceptable limits. In 2006 the College began basic measuring of computer usage through programs that run when computers and users log on and off of the network. The College began measuring the utilization of lab computers using a program called Labstats in April 2010. This program measures the usage of computers in all labs and presents the information in a web accessible format. This information has been incorporated into the Information Technology website to provide students with a real time view of lab usage allowing them to determine resource availability. Finally, in June 2010, the tools for network, server, and application monitoring were upgraded to Solar Winds. The new monitoring tools provide a wider range of monitoring capabilities, and also improve historical reporting.

Helpdesk Support

The IT Helpdesk offers one point of contact for IT services and utilizes SNOW service desk software. The Helpdesk is staffed by part-time student technicians with full-time supervisory staff support. Approximately 5,000 tickets are created annually. The Helpdesk also employs CHD for 24/7 technical assistance for students.

Hours:
Monday-Thursday 7:30 am – 9:00 pm
Friday 7:30 am – 4:30 pm
Online Learning Management Systems and Course Delivery via Blackboard

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courses / Sections</th>
<th>Fall 2008</th>
<th>Fall 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enrollments</td>
<td>1,026</td>
<td>1,013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Users</td>
<td>13,592</td>
<td>15,076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>49,971</td>
<td>50,520</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Helpdesk Support for Online Learning Management Systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System</th>
<th>Full-Time Staff</th>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Type of Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blackboard</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Monday-Thursday 7:30 am – 9:00 pm; Friday 7:30 am – 4:30 pm</td>
<td>Phone, Email, Walk-in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL)

The CTL provides a variety of services for faculty, including research, community building, discussion groups, webinars, seminars, and instructional design assistance.

Available Equipment and Space: Adjunct faculty office space; 1 Mac and 5 PC workstations for faculty development and one-on-one instruction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Components:</th>
<th>Instructional Design:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Windows XP Professional SP3</td>
<td>Camtasia 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office 2003 Professional Enterprise</td>
<td>Jing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office 2007 Professional Enterprise</td>
<td>Respondus 3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OpenOffice.org</td>
<td>StudyMate by Respondus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adobe PhotoShop CS2</td>
<td>Respondus Math Plug-in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adobe Acrobat CS2</td>
<td>SnagIt 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Audacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous:</td>
<td>Presentation:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firefox</td>
<td>SmartBoard Software</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nero</td>
<td>NetOp Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microsoft Office 2007 PDF Maker Plug-in</td>
<td>NetOp Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scanning Equipment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scantron Workstation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Media Services:

- MCC has approximately 86 Technology Enhanced Classrooms (TEC), including permanently installed data projectors, teacher station computers, document cameras in approximately 49 rooms, and TV/DVD/VCR and/or overhead projector in 76 rooms
- Other available equipment includes CD players, slide projectors, flipchart easels, and wireless microphones and speakers
- Delivery and pickup service is offered, with 6 combo carts consisting of a PC, projector, DVD deck, speakers, and other equipment
- Two laptops are available for short-term checkout
- In 2008-09, there were approximately 6,600 deliveries/pick-ups

Hours:
Monday-Thursday 7:30 am – 9:00 pm
Friday 7:30 am – 4:30 pm
Library (LIT) Resources

Circulation and Usage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Circulation – All Categories</td>
<td>8,500</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patronage (gate counts)</td>
<td>161,701</td>
<td>150,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Database Activity – Searches Performed</td>
<td>10,500</td>
<td>12,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Open Student/Community Computer Lab Hours (general for a fall or winter term):

- **Monday-Thursday**: 7:30 am – 10:00 pm
- **Friday**: 7:30 am – 4:30 pm
- **Saturday**: Closed
- **Sunday**: 1:00 pm – 6:00 pm

Television Services

- Production support is offered, including duplication of VHS, CD, and DVD; format transfer (e.g. VHS to DVD); and simple video editing.
- Two video cameras are available for short-term checkout.
- Classroom taping assistance is available.

7. Financial Data

A. Actual Unrestricted Revenues*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FY 2007-08 Actual</th>
<th>FY 2008-09 Actual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuition and Fees</td>
<td>$7,610,178</td>
<td>$8,089,501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Appropriations</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,891,725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Appropriations</td>
<td>8,369,000</td>
<td>8,518,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Appropriations/District Taxes</td>
<td>9,696,789</td>
<td>9,963,061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Operating Grants/Contracts</td>
<td>560,593</td>
<td>1,901,070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Operating Grants/Contracts</td>
<td>2,095,388</td>
<td>1,627,694</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Operating Grants/Contracts</td>
<td>53,871</td>
<td>50,826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Non-operating Grants</td>
<td>3,939,001</td>
<td>5,135,061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gifts/Contributions</td>
<td>274,465</td>
<td>142,404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment Income</td>
<td>632,901</td>
<td>160,915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auxiliary</td>
<td>741,930</td>
<td>718,964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: Operating</td>
<td>871,691</td>
<td>830,944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: Non-operating</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>331,422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Revenues</strong></td>
<td><strong>$34,845,807</strong></td>
<td><strong>$39,362,187</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Actual Unrestricted Expenses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FY 2007-08 Actual</th>
<th>FY 2008-09 Actual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>$13,880,269</td>
<td>$13,335,094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Support</td>
<td>3,072,578</td>
<td>3,011,196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Service</td>
<td>886,080</td>
<td>480,488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Services</td>
<td>4,593,945</td>
<td>6,079,863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Aid/Scholarships</td>
<td>2,508,804</td>
<td>3,232,645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Administration</td>
<td>5,495,949</td>
<td>5,402,309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operation/Maintenance of Plant</td>
<td>2,612,878</td>
<td>2,635,383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auxiliary</td>
<td>249,593</td>
<td>495,002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Operating Expenses</strong></td>
<td><strong>$33,300,096</strong></td>
<td><strong>$34,671,980</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*From IPEDS Annual Reports

C. Muskegon Community College did not experience a shortfall in either of the last two fiscal years; in each year, revenues exceeded expenses.