

Bay State College
122 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts

February 3, 2010

Focused Visit Report

Introduction

On March 27, 2008, Bay State College received a letter outlining the findings of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE) regarding the College's transition out of the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions and initial accreditation by CIHE. Based on the College's self-study report and the report of the team that visited the campus on October 22 through October 24, 2007, the Commission decided to defer initial accreditation until it could review additional information requested from the College demonstrating that it meets Commission Standards on *Organization and Governance* and *Integrity*. The Commission vote was scheduled for September, 2008. This letter also identified the first four areas of focus for a spring 2010 visit should accreditation be granted. These areas are:

1. increasing student retention and degree attainment;
2. strengthening the connection between planning and budgeting;
3. ensuring an appropriately qualified faculty; and
4. providing appropriate library resources and services, especially for students at remote sites.

Following submission by the College of a report and a presentation to the Commission during the Summer of 2008, a letter dated October 31, 2008 was received informing the College that initial accreditation had been granted and that the areas of focus for the spring 2010 visit should also include;

5. revising its by-laws to remove an identified inconsistency;
6. strengthening and formalizing planning and evaluation activities and ensuring appropriate support for these efforts;
7. further strengthening the institution's governance by establishing criteria for:
 - a. board and CEO evaluation; and
 - b. clarifying in written documents, including letters of appointment and the faculty handbook, the role of faculty in governance;
8. strengthening and formalizing program review, including the use of external perspectives;
9. strengthening support of the baccalaureate program, including additional elective courses at the upper division; and
10. developing a longer-range financial plan to ensure the future of the institution.

The purpose of this report is to highlight the progress Bay State College has made in the above areas and to delineate any plans that are in place to further efforts by the College to add strength in those areas.

In the spring of 2008 the College began analyzing the initial areas of focus highlighted by the visiting team and Commission (this was later expanded to include the additional areas). A specialized Project Plan was developed containing relevant elements from the existing Strategic Plan along with new goals and actions to specifically address the Commission's recommendations (Appendix A: Strategic Project Plan). Each new goal was assigned a key person responsible from the President's Executive Committee and these groups were then

expanded to include key members of the faculty, staff and committees of the Board of Trustees. Retention goals were included from the original strategic plan and new goals and enabling objectives were given a timeframe for completion divided into fiscal year quarters. Since its development the Project plan has been reviewed at least monthly by the Executive Committee and any updates recorded. Through this process of regular review, implementation, assessment, and revision the College has been able to complete or make significant progress on each area of focus identified above.

Institutional Overview

The guiding philosophy of Bay State College rests on four major tenets: prepare graduates for professional careers; maintain a nurturing learning environment; provide a strong foundation in general education appropriate to academic advancement; and remain flexible and responsive to the changing demands of an evolving workforce.

Continuing in the earliest tradition of the Institution (which was first founded as a travel academy in 1946) the College has maintained at its core a small school environment with a culture of personal attention and career-oriented education. Operating as a private, two-year College for most of its history, Bay State underwent an elevation in its degree granting status in 2003. In May of 2007 the College graduated its first Bachelor's degree students. This milestone underscores a major culture shift underway at Bay State College.

In the fall of 2006, under the leadership of its new President, Craig Pfannenstiehl, Bay State College commenced the development of an innovative strategic planning initiative. Guided by the College's new vision statement, this strategic plan supports the Institution in achieving its mission. This new vision statement - *Bay State College will be the college of choice in our region for career-minded students and employers who seek well-educated graduates in our disciplines* - has enabled the College to concentrate its primary strengths of providing excellent academic instruction and advising, as well as a superior level of student services on the well defined area of career education. This new vision also serves as a touchstone for future planning, for adding new programs and for allocating resources.

In response to the change in degree-granting status, the Bay State College Mission Statement underwent revision in the spring of 2005, a process that included administration, faculty, and staff, as well as the Board of Directors. The current Mission Statement was adopted by the College's Board of Directors on July 12, 2005, and reviewed on April 25, 2006 and April 17, 2007.

Bay State College is a private college whose mission is to provide students with a quality education that prepares them for professional careers and increasing levels of higher education. Bay State College accomplishes this mission by providing a learning environment where teaching excellence and student services are blended to support the uniqueness of individual students, preparing them to achieve their full potential as ethically and socially aware citizens.

On a daily basis, the Institution's mission is carried out through the design and execution of its academic programs. In order to best prepare its students for professional careers, the College is constantly mindful of economic trends and adjusts program offerings with the intention of providing students with the skills and training that are most marketable in the current climate. The College grants degrees in disciplines such as business and management, allied health, criminal justice, fashion design and merchandising, and entertainment management—all of which can lead directly to employment upon graduation.

Through the execution of the Vision 2010 Strategic Plan and the Project Plan designed around the recommendations of the Commission, Bay State College has made significant strides towards supporting its students, faculty and staff. The following achievements are those most relevant to this report:

- Newly created Department of Academic Development with a full-time Director. Department encompasses the Center for Learning and Academic Success (CLAS) (tutoring, special accommodations support), the Strive program that includes learning coaches and the Academic Achievement course for students on probation
- Grand opening of the Learning Commons. This brand new space includes the Library and the Center for Learning and Academic Success
- Student Success Coordinator positions established to provide both academic and non-academic support for at risk students and students with special needs
- Student Personal Counselor upgraded to a full-time position to accommodate student demand
- Institution of weekly attendance tracking - Last Day of Attendance (LDA) meetings. With participation from all departments both academic and non-academic, this meeting provides a forum for sharing information on at-risk students
- Awards and Recognition program to celebrate those student achievements that are independent of GPA. Examples of awards include the Helping Hands Award, the School Spirit Award, the Community Service Award, and the Professional Excellence Award.
- Newly developed Director of Student Activities position has allowed for a dramatic increase in student activities and student involvement in governance
- Design and implementation of a formalized academic program review process that includes a new self-study process and incorporates external perspective. Pilot program reviews due to be completed by spring of 2010
- Creation of Rank and Promotion Policy for faculty that incorporates faculty scholarship as a relevant area for faculty engagement for the first time in Bay State history
- Established a budget of \$1,000 for each full-time faculty member per year in non-competing funds to be used solely for faculty development and scholarship

- Formalized statement of Faculty Role in Governance and included this statement in the newly created Faculty Handbook as well as in appointment letters for faculty
- Created a Faculty Hiring Committee
- Added five full-time faculty positions (a 30% increase) including two Ph.D.s
- Introduced a peer mentoring program for all incoming students
- Associate Dean of Academic Affairs position created to support faculty development, academic program review, learning outcomes assessment, and retention efforts

Bay State College has long recognized that many students are seeking an educational experience that provides individual care and attention. The College also understands that a significant portion of its students come to the College from non-traditional backgrounds. Many of our students are the first in their respective families to attend college and have not always known academic success. Because of its small size, the college has always maintained an atmosphere of accessibility. The College offers small classes and open access to faculty and staff. Each student receives an academic advisor who is a full-time faculty member and who can provide individualized attention. These faculty advisors know their students well and work to optimize each student's educational experience. This special attention to the uniqueness of each student is central to what defines the College's distinctive character and is reflected throughout the Institution by adherence to the College's core values of Quality, Respect and Support.

Areas of Focus

1. Increasing student retention and degree attainment

Increasing student retention and improving graduation rates have long been priorities at Bay State College. In fact, the majority of the recent accomplishments listed above have been executed with retention as the driving force. One of the five strategies of the Vision 2010 Strategic Plan, and the most important, is “Improve Student Retention”. Over time, the retention effort has been narrowed down to three primary areas: the enrollment process, engagement with academic content, and student services and support. Bay State has identified that attrition is at its highest between the first and third semester of student’s program. Those students returning for the second year have a much higher likelihood of graduating.

| Retention & Graduation Reporting | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Graduation Rates (150%) | | | | Projection / Goals | |
| | Sep 04 / May 2007 | Sep 05 / May 2008 | Sep 06 / May 2009 | DRAFT May 2010 | May 2011 |
| Graduation Rates (150%) | 24% | 28% | 29% | 27% (draft) 30% (Projected) | 33% |
| Retention Rates – Day Division | | | | | |
| | Sep'07 | Sep'08 | Sep'09 | Sep'10 Goals | Sep'11 Goals |
| Fall Starts-to-Spring | 79% | 81% | 78% | 83% | 85% |
| Fall-to-Spring - All | 83% | 85% | 81% | 85% | 86% |
| Fall Starts-to-Fall* | 54% | 47% | 51% (projected) 60% (goal) | 55% | 57% |
| Spring Starts-to-Fall | 54% | 50% | 79% | 79% | 80% |
| Spring-to-Fall - All | N/A | 57% | 75% | 77% | 80% |
| *Primary measure of retention | | | | | |

As the chart above shows, the College has had ups and downs in its successes with retention. Bay State’s five year goal is to retain 65% of its first year students into the second year and to eventually graduate more than 50%. The chart illustrates that one year retention has historically

been around 50%. The College is now executing on a comprehensive retention strategy (see narrative below) which will have long term positive impacts on retention and graduation rates. However, it is expected that annual improvements will be incremental as the charts above show. Since the transition in fall 2008, the first cohort to be affected by the College's renewed focus and the many initiatives described below is the spring 2009 start. The entire spring 2009 population was retained at 75%, a significant increase from the prior year. Additionally, the new students who started in spring 2009 were retained one year later at a 66% rate (exceeding the College goal) which is 58% higher than the average retention of the spring cohorts from the prior three years.

Although graduation rates are ascending each year, much work is to be done and affecting that rate is the primary goal of the institution. Given the proximity of this focused report and visit with the transition completed in fall 2008, not much more evidence can be provided regarding outcomes other than what the College describes below as its strategic moves. Material changes to retention and graduation rates will take years from the date of these changes.

As these past few years have been a significant learning experience the College believes it is moving in the right direction but has to continue to push forward in all of these primary areas. The strategic changes Bay State has implemented in order to positively impact graduation rates are described in summary below.

Enrollment: Over the past four years nearly every aspect of the enrollment process has been reviewed and in many cases improved. Having identified potential trouble spots related to efficiency in and communication of the financial aid awarding process, the College has moved to a Tuition Planner model. This has significantly increased financial aid transparency for incoming students. Since fall 2007, the College has also more than tripled the amount of institutional aid since the comprehensive visit (from \$735k in 2007 to \$2.6 million in AY'10 and an expect \$3.1 million in fiscal 2011) and for Fall 2009 developed a strategy to attract students who are more likely to be successful and persist (academic suspension data support this statement 6.6% of freshmen versus 9.5% for fall 2008 and 12.4% in fall 2007).

Admissions standards have also been impacted. The College is in the second year of a three year plan to impact graduation rates starting with admissions. The first year simply focused on increasing rejections (14.1% in fall 2009 versus 9.6% in fall 2008 and virtually 0% in fall 2007) of those not likely to succeed based on academic records. Some highlights of the second phase include an improved model for normalizing grade point averages and evaluating high school achievement and data collected regarding relative student success from various "feeder" high schools. The College used this period to adopt the Wonderlic test (aptitude) for fall 2009 freshmen and collect data to assist in better prediction of an applicant's ability to succeed (Workroom Document 1: Wonderlic Score Data). Correlation data was used to develop an aptitude and placement rubric which resulted in minimum score guidelines and altered admissions standards for the fall 2010 entering class. The plan is to analyze fall 2009 data again after one year of attendance and execute the third phase of admissions criteria adjustment for the fall 2011 class.

Engagement with academic content: A student's level of enthusiasm about what he or she is learning in the classroom can significantly impact the desire to attend and remain in school. Bay State is approaching the task of optimizing this important aspect of the college experience in a variety of ways. Beginning with making sure that students are placed in a major area of study that is of real interest to them, to increasing the number and quality of interactive experiences with the content, this is one of the College's primary areas of focus. To support the Vice

President of Academic Affairs in these efforts a new position, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, has been created.

By improving communication with, and the orientation and observation of, adjunct faculty, the College hopes to ensure that every instructor brings with them the level of professionalism and facility with the subject matter necessary to spark students' curiosity. The recent addition of five full-time faculty positions also helps to ensure that students have access to experience and depth of knowledge in the classroom.

With the exception of the associate's degree in Fashion Design, every major at the College now includes an internship requirement (in two of the three bachelor's degree programs two internships are required). These experiences, in addition to expanding career opportunities upon graduation, provide students with a real-life environment to test and expand on what is learned in the classroom. It is often seen that students demonstrate a level of performance in the workplace that was previously unknown to their professors, and that this motivation is retained in subsequent semesters.

To support students needing additional time with course content the Center for Learning and Academic Success (CLAS) has been expanded to create the Department of Academic Development. Headed by the Director of Academic Development, this department is housed within the newly formed Learning Commons along with the college Library. Areas that include tutoring (by peers, graduate students and faculty), the Academic Achievement Course for students on probation, assisting the Student Success Coordinators (described below), and exploring new academic initiatives such as learning communities are all coordinated by this new department and included in the Office of Academic Development Strategic Plan (Workroom Document 2).

Student Services: Retention efforts that fall within the realm of student services have been focused on two primary areas. One area of focus is increasing the breadth of co curricular activities and providing students with many more opportunities to get involved within the College community outside of the classroom. The first full-time Director of Student Activities position was added in the fall of 2008. Since that time there has been a tremendous growth in the number of student-run clubs and organizations as well as a significant increase in participation in the Student Government Association. In the last three semesters the following new clubs and organizations have formed on campus:

- Community Os (community outreach organization)
- Bay State Beat (student run monthly newsletter)
- Campus Activities Board
- Green Club
- Residents Hall Association
- The Headliner (College yearbook)
- Cheerleading
- Physical Therapist Assistant Club
- Student Ambassadors (to assist the Admissions department)
- Audio Engineering Society
- Gay Straight Alliance
- The Step Club (dance)
- Bay State College Performers (Singing and Performance Organization)

The second area of focus has been to provide students with resources to help manage challenges that may arise outside of the classroom and increased support for students with learning disabilities. In September 2009 the Personal Counselor became a full-time position at

the College. This need was identified, added to the Strategic Plan and then implemented this past fall. To supplement this effort, a brand new position of Student Success Coordinator was added in January of 2009. Now expanded to two full-time positions, the Student Success Coordinators track and communicate with at-risk students and try to act as point persons for any obstacle a student may encounter. These individuals are also responsible, with the Personal Counselor, for ensuring that any student in need of special learning accommodations receive those services. The recently formed Student Success Committee shares the responsibility of identifying students at risk by maintaining various reports on student attendance and financial issues, as well as information gleaned from faculty, residence life staff and any other employee of the College that may have pertinent information. This committee meets regularly to review the status of at-risk students and to share information obtained by different divisions within the College.

2. Strengthening and Formalizing Planning and Evaluation

The Institutional Effectiveness Survey, now in its fourth year of use, generates much of the data that forms the backbone of strategic planning and budget allocation at the College. The Institutional Effectiveness (IE) Committee also prominently uses data derived from:

Quantitative

- The Workforce Climate Survey
- The Student Satisfaction Survey

Qualitative

- Meetings with staff, faculty and students centered on retention

The IE Committee collates and analyzes the data from these instruments and produces a report (Workroom Document 3: 2009 and 2008 IE Committee Reports) that is submitted to college administration for budget consideration and planning purposes. Using the IE data, the College has been able to prioritize what is most important and possible within the given resources to impact the quality of education and work life at Bay State.

Since the comprehensive visit in October 2007, the Institution has been focused on coordinating and centralizing responsibility for evaluation that at the time only resided partially within the new Institutional Effectiveness Committee. The IE Committee consists of a cross-section of Institutional representatives. Their work has been strengthened considerably over the last 3 years. Examples include:

- In 2008, the College moved all management of the evaluation instruments to the committee thereby increasing autonomy in the data that is generated from faculty and staff, strengthening the participatory and independent nature of college governance;
- In 2009, the College moved the timing of the evaluation work earlier in the year to ensure there was appropriate time to impact the annual budget and / or be inserted into the College's strategic plan;
- The revision and creation of the IE surveys now comes completely from within the committee, using suggestions and feedback from staff, faculty and administration strengthening the staff and faculty's role in shared governance;
- According to the chair of the IE Committee, "The dramatic increases in response numbers and rates are, we on the committee have already concluded, indications of

the effectiveness of the College in responding to issues and conclusions raised by the data and the IE Report. This is really empirical, but the perception is widespread that these are not empty surveys but tools the College really uses in the planning and budgeting process". Response rates have climbed from 2007 through this year from 39%, to 62% to 84% of all employees.

The College has also worked to formalize the process:

- The College adopted a formalized process (Appendix B: Map of IE Assessment Process) that is systematic and broad-based;
 - The illustration directly links college-wide input into the budget and strategic planning in a systematic and democratic way and provides for increased communication;
- As part of the process, a large array of college management meets every spring, usually in March, to review the IE Committee report to prioritize and develop action plans and key persons responsible for executing the agreed upon strategic and operational objectives;
- The Planning efforts are then tracked using the College's Strategic Project Plan (see Appendix A), a compilation of projects, timelines, and key persons responsible.

Specific recommendations from the committee's research include improving communication, retention-related efforts, increasing adjunct pay, and employee human resources among others. The relocation of both the Library (summer 2009) and the Center for Learning and Academic Success into the newly combined Learning Commons, the expansion of computer availability, upgrades to the wireless system in the residence halls, the relocation of the Fashion Department to a more modern Facility and the creation of a Black Box Theater/Classroom for the Entertainment Management Department are more examples that support the efficacy of the College's planning and evaluation activities.

The College's recent growth has allowed it to explore other ways to enhance support and coordination in the future. The College began in December 2009 to draft a job description for a Director of Institutional Research (Appendix C). The hire is expected to be included in the 2010-11 budget and made in the first half of AY 2011.

Planning & Budgeting

Preliminary data from the 2010 IE evaluation work evidence employee support that planning and budgeting are integrally linked at the College. Eighty-five respondents or 69% of all employees either strongly or somewhat agreed that they "can see how the budget process takes into consideration the College's Strategic Plan". This is a 3% increase over last year, when 66% strongly or somewhat agreed.

The College has a budget process that is comprehensive and broad-based and takes into account input from those responsible for institutional objectives. The College's evaluation and planning work is directly linked to the budgeting process and shared with all members of staff and faculty (Workroom Document 4: Budget-SP Link Presentation). Since the comprehensive visit, the College changed the timing of its evaluation data collection to occur in the winter in order to ensure high priority or short-term items could be identified, prioritized and planned for

in accordance with College objectives. This allows newly identified priorities to be included in the College's spring budgeting process (The Peer Mentor Program is an example from last year that came from management meetings with students). Individual action plans are developed and any longer-term projects are added to the integrated strategic and long-range financial plans.

The College is currently developing a budgeting and planning model that accounts for program level differences and changes over time that will examine the resources invested in each program. This model will look at each program bi-annually based on population, dedicated costs and shared overhead, as well as key outcomes like retention and placement, and assist in determining resources available at the program level during the budgeting process. This model will be fully incorporated in the budgeting process in FY 2012 but be introduced to Department Chairs in phases beginning in the FY 2011 budgeting process.

3. Ensuring an appropriately qualified faculty

As a result of the College's self-study process, culminating in the site visit in the spring of 2008, it became clear that hiring full-time faculty with terminal degrees needed to become a priority. Toward this end several steps were taken. First, data was collected to determine where full-time faculty members were distributed between both academic departments and courses by subject area. These data were used to identify an initial focus of general education courses for the hiring of new full-time faculty. Motivating students enrolled in required courses that are outside of their major area of study is often one of the biggest classroom challenges. Therefore, general education courses benefit greatly from full-time faculty instruction. Implementation of this plan began in the fall of 2009 with two new full-time faculty positions added in English and Math. A sudden large increase in enrollment in the Physical Therapist Assistant program brought with it the need for one additional full-time faculty hire in that department as well. In addition, a full-time qualified Nursing faculty member/program administrator was also hired in anticipation of the new associate degree in nursing program currently under review for the fall of 2010.

The College has successfully added two new full-time faculty members holding Ph.D. degrees, one in the English Department and the other as the new Chair of the Business Department (where a vacancy made this position available). The College is currently interviewing for two new faculty positions for the fall of 2010. The Business Department is seeking a full-time faculty member that possesses a Ph.D. and a background in the hospitality industry. The Criminal Justice Department is in the process of interviewing candidates for a full-time faculty position that will require a Ph.D. in criminal justice, urban sociology or a related field.

Full-time Faculty Credentials

| | | |
|-----------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Fall 2008 | Total Full-time | F-T Faculty with terminal degrees |
| | 15 | 3 |
| Fall 2009 | Total Full-time | F-T Faculty with terminal degrees |
| | 20 | 6 |

In order to make Bay State College a viable and attractive option for a Ph.D. wishing to conduct research, several significant changes have been implemented. First, a faculty hiring committee was formed to distribute the responsibility, expand faculty input, and provide support to the hiring department. Second, a new Rank and Promotion Policy was drafted by the Faculty Senate that includes scholarly research along with teaching and service as one of the three primary roles of every faculty member. Although every faculty member can allocate how much time they plan to devote to each area there are three levels of research where a minimum allocation of ten percent is an option. Finally, the College has committed a new budget item of dedicated funds for faculty development and research. Currently, every full-time faculty member has access to \$1,000 each academic year with additional research funds available through a proposal process currently in development.

4. Providing appropriate library resources and services, especially for students at remote sites

As of the fall of 2009 the Bay State College Library, along with CLAS, moved to a modern facility to create the new Learning Commons. This new space now meets ADA compliance requirements. In addition to doubled shelf space, the new Library has twice as many computers (20 vs. 10). The new space features wireless access, and students can bring in their own laptops or borrow one of the Library's six circulating laptops to access the internet and online library resources. The Library is open Monday through Thursday 8 am to 10 PM, Friday until 4:30 PM, and since moving to the new space, has also begun to offer weekend hours: Saturday 10am-6pm, and Sunday 12-8pm, for a total of 80 hours per week.

The BSC Library's print collection is growing at a rate of 1,000 titles per year. The Library currently houses approximately 7,500 titles, and expects to reach 8,000 titles by the summer of 2010. One goal of the Library strategic plan is to double the volumes in five years. The focus of the Library's collection development continues to be on new programs as well as the continued growth of our collection in the College's established programs and general education subject areas.

In order to better serve the College's satellite campus in Middleboro, Massachusetts several steps have been taken. An agreement was established with the Maxwell Library of Bridgewater State College. Since Bridgewater State offers, with the exception of Medical Assisting, all of the academic programs offered at Bay State's Middleboro campus, the Maxwell Library is well equipped to provide resources for Bay State students. For the Medical Assisting program research was conducted into the relevant holdings in this area. Maxwell Library has a considerable list of books as well as electronic access to over 5,000 journals in the area of medicine including Medline, Science Direct and CSA's Biological Sciences Database. All Bay State College students now have access to walk-in librarian assistance, resources for academic research, and study space. In addition, students who are not current Bridgewater residents are eligible to purchase a community borrower's card for a small fee, which grants the cardholder borrowing privileges at the Maxwell Library.

The Bay State College Librarian visits the Middleboro campus in conjunction with the offering of ENG 101 (English I) to train students in the use of online Library resources. An online chat capability was added to the Library section of the College's website to offer distance students another way to reach the Library for assistance (in addition to phone and email).

For students taking courses online the Library now has a presence in every course with an embedded link to the Library's resources and contact information for research assistance. The Bay State College Library currently subscribes to the following electronic resources: The Gale database suite, LexisNexis, JSTOR, and ProQuest Central. Students are able to access these databases anywhere, at anytime, from the proxy server with a Bay State email address and password. The Library plans to subscribe to the following databases beginning in the fall of 2010 to support the anticipated new programs in nursing and criminal justice:

CQ Researcher
EBSCO Nursing Collection
Films on Demand (FFH)

5. Revising its bylaws to remove an identified inconsistency

During the period between the March 2008 deferral of accreditation action and the October 2008 granting of initial accreditation, significant changes were made to policies and procedures including the bylaws. Certain language was overlooked within the bylaws that was inconsistent with the wholesale changes made at the stockholder and trustee levels. The aberrant language in Section 11 was subsequently struck from the bylaws (Appendix D: Redline of Bylaws as Amended and Restated) and accepted by a vote of the Shareholders dated September 30, 2008 (Appendix E: Consent in Lieu of Special Meeting of the Shareholders). This change ensures the bylaws are consistent with the not only the Governance Guidelines adopted in 2008 but also the spirit and intent of the governance changes.

6. Strengthening and formalizing planning and evaluation activities and ensuring appropriate support for these efforts

This area of focus is covered under # 2 above "Strengthening the connection between planning and budgeting"

7. Further strengthening the institution's governance by:

a. Establishing criteria for board and CEO evaluation

The Board has adopted specific criteria for both CEO and Board performance that ensure the evaluations are meaningful and impactful for the institution. Both sets of criteria were implemented in 2008 and used again in 2009 with typical modifications. The criteria are used to measure year-over-year Board and CEO performance in meeting the goal of enhanced effectiveness.

The Nominating & Corporate Governance Committee (NCG) of the Board is responsible for the Board assessment and in using the results of that assessment to improve both the Board as a whole as well as the Committees. In 2008, the Board adopted an amended version of the Board self-assessment tool (F3 Summary Self-Assessment Data) recommended and proffered by the Association of Governing Boards (AGB), a non-profit organization whose mission is to strengthen the governance of college boards. The NCG also adopted specific criteria based on AGB recommendations for board and committee self-assessment (see Appendix F2: Evaluative Criteria for Board Self-Assessment 2009) which provides guidance for ensuring improvements that are useful to the institution (See Appendix F1: Map of Self-Assessment Process Jan 2009).

The Board self-assessment is administered annually and reviewed by the NCG. Results of the assessment are used to enhance the effectiveness of the Board. An example from the 2008 self-assessment included identified needs at the Board level for more financial expertise (Question #34). The NCG was then able to follow-up by adding Scott Fields to the Board in July 2009, a Bay State Alumni who was also the VP of Administration & Finance for Boston University's School of Theology. This expertise was important to enhance the effectiveness and knowledge of the Board's Finance and Long Range Planning Committee. This concern was identified in 2008, with recommendations implemented in 2009, and will be measured again in 2010.

In 2010, the Board is currently searching for a marketing expert (67% of Trustees expressed a need) with a diverse perspective as a result of the latest 2009 Board self-assessment. In addition, the College's Institutional Effectiveness Committee produced recommendations to enhance the Board's effectiveness that came as a result of the College's 2009 Institutional Effectiveness Survey (Appendix G: IE Committee Memo for Board of Trustees). The Committee stated, "While a 54% [positive] response by staff, administration and faculty indicating they can see the 'concrete connection' between the College's Board and the Institution's operations may point to an area for possible improvement, that 54% represents an increase of 28% over the 2008 IS Survey response...". The Board's NCG committee used this feedback from employees to develop an action plan which was executed by management to address the Institutional Effectiveness Committee recommendations. Preliminary data points again to an improvement in 2010 to 60% agree or strongly agree.

CEO Evaluation

In April 2008, the Board formalized the process by which the CEO is evaluated on an annual basis and approved that process at their April 28, 2008 meeting. This process was refined in August 2009 (see Appendix H & I: CEO evaluation process Apr08 revAug09) and is illustrated in Appendix N: Map of CEO Evaluation Process. The process can be twofold. There is a comprehensive process every three years (last conducted in March 2008) that includes external review of the CEO. In the interim years there is a less comprehensive process. Both processes call for a CEO self-evaluation submitted to the Trustees that is both qualitative and quantitative. The Board established specific criteria against which the CEO is evaluated (See Appendix J: CEO Self-Evaluation criteria) including performance of the college against specific benchmarks from the Long-Range Strategic & Financial Plan (See Appendix K: Strategic Plan Results versus Goals Example). These processes were last followed in March 2008 and November 2009 respectively.

The Board ensures the effectiveness of the evaluation by reviewing the CEO's self-assessment, providing its own assessment of the CEO, and using that data to identify specific

areas of focus it has for the CEO and the College. This process occurs annually in the fall. CEO compensation is reviewed either by the Finance Committee of the Trustees and / or the Chairman of the Board using industry comparable data.

- b. Clarifying in written documents including the letters of appointment and the faculty handbook, the role of faculty in governance.

The Faculty Handbook (Workroom Document 5: page 47) now includes the Role of Faculty in Shared Governance Statement adopted in the spring 2009. This statement is also included in all appointment letters for new faculty members.

8. Strengthening and formalizing program review, including the use of external perspectives

Prior to the CIHE transition self-study the College's academic programs received regular informal evaluation from a variety of sources including the various program advisory committees formed within each department. The practice of utilizing an external reviewer, defined as an individual with no prior relationship with the College, was first introduced in response to comments from the visiting team. Since that time the program review process has incorporated a formal self-study followed by a review and response from the Curriculum Committee (Appendix L: Academic Program Assessment Process). The associate's degree in business administration self-study, the first review utilizing this new process, is on schedule to be submitted to the Curriculum Committee in February 2010. The next program in line, the associate's degree in criminal justice, has completed the external review process and is working on the self-study document. Programs will cycle through this process approximately every six years (Appendix M: Program Review Schedule).

9. Strengthening support of the baccalaureate program, including additional elective courses at the upper division

Bay State College offered its first 300 level courses in the fall of 2005 following the elevation to bachelor's degree granting status in three of its programs (Management, Entertainment Management, and Fashion Merchandising). As students began moving to the third and fourth year in small numbers it was a challenge to obtain sufficient enrollment to offer electives beyond those classes required for graduation. As the three programs all have a foundation in business, students have been able to, with some restrictions, use courses offered by other departments to fulfill their elective options. Since receiving notification from the Commission to provide greater elective opportunities for upper division students, the College has gradually been able to add courses in these three programs as well as within the humanities. Beginning in the fall of 2009 (the spring 2009 master schedule had already been created at the time of the notification), and going forward with the spring 2010 schedule, the elective offerings available to bachelor's degree students have been steadily increasing. At the time of the Commission site visit in the spring of 2008 there was only a single upper-division elective available, a literature elective, for a student in his or her third or fourth year. Following the

Commission's recommendation to increase these offerings three electives were made available in the fall of 2009. These electives were in the areas of entertainment management, business and literature. The Fashion Department did not have any students ready to enroll in an upper-level elective that semester. Currently, for the spring 2010 semester there are a total of six electives available. Two of them, new courses in media writing and honors literature, are 200 level courses but were determined to be of interest to students in the baccalaureate degree programs (Appendix N: Elective Offerings by Semester).

The College plans to stand by its commitment to continue this trend regardless of class size, although as enrollment and retention in these programs are both trending upwards small class size should no longer be a factor.

This effort is also supported by a gradual change in the faculty profile of the College, with an increase in Ph.D. level faculty bringing a greater depth of knowledge and ability to teach these more demanding courses.

10. Developing a longer range financial plan to ensure the future of the Institution

At the time of the October 2007 visit, the college had a fledgling long range financial plan that incorporated the strategic plan but it had not been disseminated or approved by the Board and thus was not made available to the team. The plan still breathes today (Workroom Document 6: Strategic and long Range Financial Plan) and is a living document that incorporates changes as they occur. The College's strategic plan which extends through AY 2011 is included as well as financial forecasts through 2015. This plan incorporates specific plans for IT, facilities, the library, and personnel.

The College has devised a plan to ensure appropriate resources not entirely dependent on the shareholders including a Financial Reserve Policy (Appendix O: Financial Reserve Policy) adopted by the Finance Committee of the Board in February 2010. The College is very healthy financially according to the Department of Education financial stability ratios. The US Department of Education considers proprietary institutions financially responsible if:

- the school has a composite score of at least 1.5;
- the school has sufficient cash reserves to make the required refunds, including the return of Title IV funds (these requirements are known as the refund reserve standards);
- the school is meeting all of its financial obligations, including making required refunds, including the return of Title IV funds and making repayments to cover Title IV program debts and liabilities; and
- the school is current in its debt payments.

Bay State meets or exceeds all of these requirements to be considered financially responsible. The composite score standard combines different measures of fundamental elements of financial health to yield a single measure of a school's overall financial health. Bay State has exceeded that test every year (2.1, 1.7, 1.6 respectively in 2007 - 2009) and forecasts a 2.2 projected score in 2010. Each year through the College's forecast to 2015, the College expects to be at or above a 2.2 composite score (See Long range financial plan).

In fall 2010, the College hired an independent financial consultant to perform some fundamental analysis on the operating results as of November 30, 2009. The numbers which

show strong profitability growth and virtually across-the-board strengthening of the balance sheet is shown as Appendix P: Consultant Financial Analysis. Highlights include

- Operating profits as described below are up considerably;
- Cash on hand has increased;
- Increased liquidity – current ratio is at 4.96 versus 0.94 in June 2007;
- Decreased debt – every leverage ratio is down substantially. For example, total debt as a % of assets is at 17% versus 54% in 2007.

The College managed operating surpluses, EBITDA- Earnings Before Interest Depreciation and Amortization, in each of the fiscal years 2007 through 2009. Enrollment trends are strong, up 62% since the strategic plan started, and continued strong operating results are expected to continue to bolster the balance sheet for the foreseeable future (minimally through the 2015 forecast).

Summary Appraisal and Plans

There is a general level of excitement at the College about the growth and progress being made across the institution. The list of accomplishments included in the overview of this report demonstrates the College's commitment of financial and other resources to impact outcomes in all areas. The College has systematically provided additional staffing and support in key areas identified as priorities through its evaluation and planning processes. Several new initiatives, positions, and programs, particularly those related to retention such as the LDA Committee, the Student Success Coordinators, and the Department of Academic Development, are "works in progress" and will be continuously assessed and modified as data regarding their function and effectiveness is evaluated.

The College believes that its progress in the areas of focus has been comprehensive and well executed. Several of the Commission's recommendations had already been underway as part of the College's Strategic Plan (particularly in the areas of graduation and retention, faculty hiring/qualifications, planning and budgeting, library improvement and access, and the long-range financial plan) when the letters referenced above were received. Those that were not being addressed became part of an integrated project plan that identified goals, action plans and key persons responsible. These efforts are reviewed on a regular basis and are used as contributing factors for budget planning each spring

Finally, planning and evaluation at the College continues to evolve and improve. As it was an area of focus in this report, a detailed description is provided above. In spring 2010, the College will embark on its next generation strategic planning process led by the College's President and is expected to be completed at the time we commence the comprehensive visit preparation for spring 2013.