2011 - 2015

Academic Plan

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
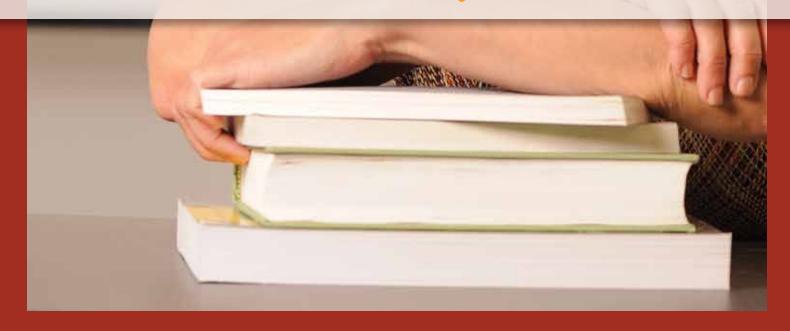EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE

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SUNY Empire State College: Academic Plan 2011 - 2015

Preface

Following a process of consultation with faculty and staff throughout the college, the Academic Planning Task Force (2010 - 2011) is pleased to present SUNY Empire State College's first academic plan. This plan is the result of many long hours of outreach, discussion, deliberation, and creative thinking by the members of the Academic Planning Task Force and the broader college community. We believe this plan can energize and inspire our academic community to approach the future with clarity, collegiality, and pride. We see this plan as an important step in helping to define and achieve aspirations for the college and for our students. In that spirit, we envision the academic plan to be a living, evolving document, revisited and revised regularly to ensure its resilience and ongoing relevance.

The overarching purpose of the plan is to organize and clarify an academic direction for the college. The task force was dedicated to developing a plan that is shaped by the input of faculty and staff; reaffirms the college's commitments, values and traditions; facilitates the advancement of important college and SUNY initiatives; and positions the college to thrive as it adapts to changes in the world around us. These factors are linked by a commitment to serve our students' educational interests and professional objectives, and this commitment, ultimately, is the plan's cornerstone. The plan enables the college to communicate its principles and educational emphases to external communities, including prospective students, and provides increased coherence and structure for decision making regarding future program support. Moreover, the academic plan is intended to constitute a framework for achieving a more robust interdisciplinary environment, a goal of considerable significance to our academic community.

The plan seeks to clarify linkages between what the college has traditionally valued and the emerging needs of our students. Thus, it represents an opportunity to celebrate the college's history and distinctiveness, while charting a course for our future.

The Academic Planning Task Force wishes to acknowledge three important points. First, this plan cannot – and is not intended to – address all issues and implications related to charting an academic direction for the college. The academic plan can neither accommodate nor anticipate all the academic work performed by the college or all the initiatives we may undertake in the future. Further, as this is the first academic plan developed by the college, it represents a beginning rather than an ending point. Moreover, this plan is not intended to supersede the academic freedom of the faculty, nor constrict the purview of, or replace particular institutional structures, such as areas of study, through which academic standards are developed and maintained. Rather, the purpose of the plan is to provide coherence of direction for the academic future of the college within a specific time frame. In this manner, the plan is best viewed as a guide.

Second, although there is a concerted effort to align the academic plan with major college initiatives currently underway, not all new initiatives could be fully addressed. For example, as the open university concept matures, and as we undertake the process of updating our definition of "student success," the relationship of these initiatives to an academic direction for the college can be considered more fully in subsequent iterations of the plan.

Third, the academic plan in general, and in particular the academic themes identified in the first section of the plan, are not intended to be static or permanent. As environmental conditions and student needs change, so should our academic plan. The Office of Academic Affairs will have principal responsibility for an annual review of the academic plan, in consultation with relevant undergraduate and graduate committees and with faculty and staff throughout the college. By regularly reviewing the plan, and continually striving to ensure that it reflects the best ideas of all who are affiliated with the college, we can be confident of its evolving, yet enduring value as a blueprint for serving our students' needs.

Introduction: Student Centeredness

In developing the college's first academic plan, we sought to identify an organizing principle for our task, that is, an underlying concept that could guide the development and direction of an academic plan. The notion of **student centeredness** emerged to fulfill this need by providing foundational value to the task force's mandate that was congruent with the college's mission, history and current commitments.

Unlike the traditional higher education model which generally requires students to adapt to pre-structured programs, SUNY Empire State College was founded on the premise of engaging the student as an active partner in the shaping of his or her own academic program. The focus on the adult learner, by definition, demands consideration of the unique features of the learner's experience and, by extension, the manner by which such experience may be integrated in academic goal setting and curriculum design for that student. Processes and practices such as degree planning and learning contracts are reflective of the student's central role in mapping the course of his or her education at the college.

Similarly, the college's historically strong liberal arts curriculum has provided students with exposure to a broad range of human endeavor – for example, in culture and the arts, in business and technology, and in social and natural sciences. A core value of respect – for fellow students and citizens, for their ideas and the communities in which they live and work, and for the environment on which we all depend – infuses our academic community with a common, fundamental ethic.

When taken together, these foundational elements – individualized learning arrangements and liberal arts education – prepare the college's adult learners not only for professional and vocational pursuits, but also for citizenship in a broader sense. That is, the invitation to students to serve as partners in their educational planning is characteristic of a paradigm which encourages respect toward others; simply put, it demonstrates that we care about what they think as well as what they already know. But it also establishes for students a responsibility for active and constructive engagement in the charting and governance of their own educational experience.

Respect for others and the exercise of social responsibility are essential pillars of good citizenship. Citizenship is a function of participation in the community. Given the distributive and centrifugal nature of our college and the geographical boundlessness afforded by our online model, the definition of "community" can be quite expansive, a notion that will serve the college well as it moves toward becoming an "open university." Moreover, the academic themes proposed in this document suggest a capacity for serving the needs of students who live and work in diverse and far-reaching communities. Ultimately, therefore, citizenship, with respect to our students, may be considered global.

Faculty throughout the college communicated a determination to preserve the centrality of the students' role in fashioning the course of their education. As the college has evolved and grown, its capacity for advancing this model has increased correspondingly. Building on the student-centered archetype, programs which prepare students to achieve their professional goals fit well with the strategic direction of the college. Indeed, the college's Vision 2015 stipulates that "the college will enhance its ability to support students in their learning, and employees in their work," and programs relating to the latter have been assuming greater institutional significance. Programs which focus on strengthening professional skills complement the liberal arts and adult learner traditions because they allow the college to serve learner interests more comprehensively. Moreover, the professional-based curricula bear the stamp of values that typify the college's liberal arts tradition. For example, emphases on ethics are revealed in the college's commitment to learner goals which foster students' desire to employ their education in the service of sustaining and improving their organizations and communities and to use environmental resources with care and reverence.

Faculty also expressed an appreciation for the distinct benefits to our students if we approach our collection of disciplines as though they are naturally compatible. Consider that students in business programs must learn skills relating to empathy, a trait vital to managerial effectiveness that may be learned from exposure to great works of literature in addition to business textbooks. Artists may learn about how to develop business plans so they can imagine ways of making their craft work for them as a career. Health care practitioners may learn about social policy to become sensitized to the ethical and societal impact of their choices about who should receive health care coverage. In a more interdisciplinary environment, such richness of educational possibility occupies a more dynamic presence in the dialogue about program development and curriculum design. In more traditional higher educational environments, disciplinary boundaries tend to be more fixed; in a student-centered context, learner needs and aspirations occupy a more pronounced role in degree planning.

SUNY Empire State College's regional center model represents both an enormous asset in this academic planning endeavor, as well as a challenge. This model, that organizes the undergraduate program by regional location, constitutes a proud tradition for the college. It has enabled students to bring the perspectives of their communities to the learning environment and, at the same time, has allowed the college to have a presence in communities in which our students work and live. The regional center model, therefore, meets the personal and professional needs of our students, creates unique possibilities in terms of location-based learning, and allows the college to influence and be influenced by the character and culture of our students' communities.

While the distributive nature of the college brings the college out to the wider environment, there is, of course, the risk that it can amplify a sense of division among programs and centers and other structures by which the college is organized to provide academic services. Set against the challenge created by this tendency is the clear call from faculty for a more vigorous interdisciplinary orientation toward program planning and educational delivery. This desire is expressed as deriving from core college values which place the student at the center of the college's work.

In order to abide by these values, it is important to consider that the educational experience most beneficial for a given student may require going outside the confines of the student's geographic location, curricular concentration, or the program in which the student is primarily housed. Or it may mean that creating a smooth path from undergraduate to graduate studies is in the student's

best interest. Strengthening the processes which allow for such mobility has benefits not only to students, but to faculty and to the college as a whole. In such an environment, faculty are afforded enhanced opportunities to develop, share and combine expertise in ways that promote professional and scholarly development. The college benefits by retaining some students for extended periods when undergraduates envision possibilities for advancing their Empire State College education at the graduate level. It also means that graduate faculty will be acquainted more readily with the skills and knowledge of this group of incoming students. A more collaborative environment allows for the planning, development and implementation of blended and accelerated programs. Finally, such an environment can facilitate the achievement of resource efficiencies to which SUNY is committed.

We call, therefore, for faculty to look to the academic plan as a road map for bolstering professional relations across academic lines, and across centers and programs, so that the best interests of all who are part of our extended academic community can be served. In so doing, we believe the academic plan will reinvigorate a sense of unity among all college faculty and staff while advancing the spirit and benefit of our distinctive educational model.

Ultimately, the college's central interest is to help our students achieve success with respect to the purposes which brought them to us. As we seek to chart an academic direction for the college, we need to remain attentive to the broader context, including regulatory constraints, program requirements, organizational culture, a distinguished history, aspirations for growth, and opportunities created by new environmental conditions. A primary purpose, then, of the academic plan is to offer a guiding framework in which faculty, administration, and staff – along with our students – can point toward the academic future of the college with coherence. In so doing, we anticipate this plan will contribute to an atmosphere conducive to active, sustained and meaningful discussion and collaboration across academic areas in the service of helping our students thrive in the college.

Organization of Academic Plan

The plan is organized into three thematic sections which offer separate but inter-related goals and objectives. Each of these sections was drafted by a subgroup of the Academic Planning Task Force. The three themes around which the plan is organized include the following: **Academic Programs; Environments for Mentoring, Teaching, and Learning; and Faculty Planning, Scholarship and Development.**

Theme A: Academic Programs was informed by a mandate to build on core college values and areas of academic and scholarly strength, so as to position the college to continue to be responsive to the educational and professional goals of our students. This section focuses on interdependent tasks as reflected in these goals: (1) create a framework for academic program development, and (2) establish a thematic approach to academic planning by identifying cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary topics which reflect the educational needs and professional interests of our students, values and traditions of particular importance to the college, and areas of opportunity based on growth or increasing societal importance.

The Task Force recognizes the importance of distinguishing between the following key terms included in the academic plan:

Academic programs are the registered offerings of the college and include undergraduate areas of study, structured undergraduate programs (i.e., nursing), graduate programs and certificates. The term "academic program" does not refer to the degree programs that our students develop, but rather addresses academic programs at an institutional level.

Themes are meant to represent broad interdisciplinary academic areas of student interest and, therefore, areas in which we need to ensure our ability to offer learning opportunities. This may mean new program development – a new AOS, a new graduate program, new certificates (both graduate and undergraduate) – or learning opportunities offered, for example, through independent study, study groups, classes or online courses, or residencies. In some cases, they represent areas in which students increasingly seek to do concentrations or earn advanced degrees. In other cases, they primarily represent a need to be able to provide study offerings. Themes are employed to guide new program development, as well as to complement our existing programmatic offerings, not to replace them.

Theme B: Environments for Mentoring, Teaching and Learning seeks to capture the interrelationships among the three areas under its purview while remaining sensitive to the multidimensional nature of the environment in which our students learn. This section includes four goals: (1) create effective, rich, and flexible learning environments, addressing the range of issues identified across all areas of infrastructure – academic, technological, physical and social – that comprise and support what we have termed "learning environments;" (2) enhance academic assessment, preparation, and support for all students through the early identification of appropriate levels of academic readiness, as well as by providing the appropriate support for those students throughout their educational careers at the college; (3) enhance educational planning for students in relevant programs, focusing on a core value and practice of the college; and (4) improve the prior learning assessment and academic review process.

Theme C: Faculty Planning, Scholarship and Development seeks to identify goals which will support and strengthen our faculty community as a whole. Two goals were constructed: (1) ensure that our faculty have the content and practice expertise necessary to serve the current and future needs of students, and (2) support faculty development in terms of scholarship and practice. The goals and objectives outlined in this section focus on the faculty as a collective and at the institutional level, not on the professional development, career planning or particular work-life balance needs of individual faculty members that are better addressed on an individualized basis.

Theme A: Academic Programs

Introduction

The Academic Plan represents an opportunity to reaffirm the college's relationship with, and obligations to students by defining how our strengths, values and aspirations may serve their needs. Therefore, the overarching purpose of ensuring that the academic plan reflects and is grounded in a commitment to student success will be served by honoring and fortifying foundational elements of the college, including our focus on the adult learner and the tradition of liberal arts education, and adapting these to opportunities which emerge from the evolving needs of learners and society. Additionally, in order to sharpen our appreciation for the college's historical commitment to student-centered values and how these help to inform our judgment about the academic direction of the college, the Academic Plan is based on a careful review of several resources and documents.

- *Research on student inquiry areas – undergraduate*
- *Research on student inquiry areas – graduate*
- *Research on concurred degrees plans for 2009 - 2010*
- Empire State College Educated Person 1970s
- *Empire State College Educated Person 1980s*
- *AAC&U statement on VALUE Rubric purpose and design*
- *Faculty resources by AOS*
- *List of Eduventures research reports*
- *Current program initiatives*

In this section on academic programs, we have identified two primary goals to guide academic planning for the future. The first, to create a framework for academic program development, focuses on clarifying existing processes for academic program development and review, as well as a recommendation for more effective governance in this area. Additionally, this section seeks to establish criteria that will guide future academic program development. The second goal, to establish a thematic approach to academic planning, seeks to define and develop academic themes which reflect and reassert a commitment to the college's core strengths and values, the evolving needs of learners and society, strategic growth opportunities, and interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches to academic planning and delivery.

Goal A1: Create a Framework for Academic Program Development

Objective A1.1: Clarify processes for academic program development and review

Current practice

Empire State College is a progressive institution that seeks to reduce the lengthy and layered curricular review processes prevalent in higher education institutions. The college strives to be responsive and agile to meet emergent student and faculty interests, and avoids traditional disciplinary silos, celebrating multidisciplinary perspectives and collaboration. This section summarizes current practices in order to clarify and affirm them for the college. We also propose a formalized approach for governance for academic program development and review, beyond that of individualized practices at the undergraduate level.

- **Individualized Concentration Development in the Context of Area of Study Guidelines:** The academic plan strongly affirms the college's approach to individualized degrees, particularly at the undergraduate level. The development of these programs is governed by center-based academic degree program review processes formalized by deans and the Office of Collegewide Academic Review (OCAR).

- **Region or Center Emergent Interests:** Broad areas of study allow for contracts and courses to be clustered for particular service to a region or center. Associate deans and deans work with faculty or faculty members to develop and manage study groups, residencies or other learning opportunities to serve a particular region. These forms of academic program development follow normal center-based review processes and generally involve center-based faculty advisory committees.

- **Collegewide Residencies, Faculty Institutes and Other Academic Initiatives:** Groups of faculty around the college also develop residencies for students across the college. College approval for these learning experiences is provided by the Office of Academic Affairs. Faculty also may cluster into affinity groups, or propose other academic initiatives within or across areas of study.

- **Sample Degrees:** Sample degrees formalized in agreements or posted in materials are developed by faculty and approved by deans and OCAR.

- **Center for Distance Learning, The Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies, Center for International Programs and School for Graduate Studies:** Some educational centers develop more structured degree programs. There is greater attention to curricular coherence within these offerings, and the responsibility for planning these initiatives lies with faculty committees, associate deans and deans.

- **Areas of Study, New Degrees, Certificates:** The existing subcommittee of the Committee on Undergraduate Studies and Policies (CUSP) responsible for program assessment (CUSP-PA) should become a standing governance committee charged with the review of new undergraduate AOS proposals (or significant revisions), undergraduate certificate proposals and the college's approach to program outcomes assessment at the undergraduate level. Membership should include representatives from each area of study, as well as representatives from the directors of academic review (DAR) and from the directors of academic support (DAS). The Graduate Studies and Policies Committee (GSPC) will continue to serve this purpose at the graduate level. Issues of overlap and joint responsibility should be reviewed and coordinated between these committees where appropriate. The provost/vice president for academic affairs also will seek input on academic program initiatives from deans and faculty chairs, recognizing the value of input from the educational centers of the college. CUSP will retain responsibility for undergraduate academic policies.

New degree certificates, programs and partnerships

Certificates

External scanning indicates that adult learners, particularly in these economic times, may be interested in shorter programs, such as certificates or other milestones on the way to the degree (see Eduventures research, stackable certificates from Massachusetts and Ohio). While recent efforts to advance certificates have predominantly focused on the graduate level, the academic plan endorses the development of academic certificates at the undergraduate level.

Professional doctorates

A specific need at the graduate level relating to the lack of professional doctorates in the state of New York has been identified. Scanning has indicated that many adults in New York state are going out of state or to private institutions to pursue these degrees. The Academic Planning Task Force supports the exploratory work currently underway to pursue collaborative degrees with other institutions with specific identified audiences.

Acceleration and combined undergraduate/graduate education

The academic plan supports efforts within the college to accelerate degree completion, for those students who are identified to have the potential to successfully move from undergraduate to graduate level study. Efforts should focus on formally creating opportunities for identified undergraduate students to take dual-enrollment studies with approval and review by graduate program faculty.

Collaboration with other colleges and sectors

In light of diminishing state support, institutions of higher education must begin to work across boundaries. Where possible, SUNY Empire State College should play a lead role in collaboration. The college has a strong history in collaborating with community colleges, and could build on that history with stronger faculty-to-faculty collaboration and more disciplinary-specific pathways programs. We are experts in adult degree completion, and developments with the Open University could promote greater formal coordination between SUNY and CUNY institutions, with corporate and community partners, as well as international partnerships and foreign language development.

Prior learning assessment

Empire State College, from its long tradition of recognizing that learning can occur from nontraditional sources, is viewed as a leader in the field of prior learning assessment (PLA). While the individual assessment of student learning should remain central and supported by sufficient resources, developing additional generic evaluations in targeted areas such as health care, business, the arts, and human services, would increase visibility and partnerships with professional groups and organizations, and open more opportunities for earlier degree completion. The time and resources required to develop and maintain current generics could offset the time and resources required to replicate the individual evaluation process across individual centers and students. (See also Theme B, Goal Three)

Objective A1.2: Identify criteria for new academic program development

Finally, in order to create a framework for academic program development and support, the academic plan seeks to establish criteria for new academic programs. These criteria are intended to assure transparency and equity in the development of new programs, and are intended to be applied across the college to any new program at any academic level, whether it is at the undergraduate, registered, area-of-study level, the certificate level, or a proposed new graduate program or certificate.

Six criteria are proposed to constitute a framework for support of academic program development. A proposal for academic program development will receive favorable attention to the extent that it:

1. advances or is consistent with the college's mission and core values
2. supports the college's strategic plan and other major college and SUNY initiatives and mandates
3. represents a growth area or economic opportunity
4. integrates effectively with other curricular areas and is conducive to interdisciplinary approaches to program and curriculum development
5. reflects and builds on the expertise of our faculty
6. serves students' needs for increasingly diverse programmatic options

We posit that it is important to consider three issues as these criteria are reviewed. First, the criteria should be viewed as interdependent. For example, enhanced interdisciplinary approaches to program development will, by definition, facilitate increased exposure to learning opportunities for students; at the same time, a more interconnected collegial environment facilitates greater opportunities for faculty professional development. Similarly, as the college focuses on growth areas, our capacity will strengthen for attracting students and preparing them for meaningful transitions to further education or career growth.

Second, it is not expected that every proposal will satisfy all six criteria or satisfy them in the same way or satisfy them equally. Not all six need to be substantially present to sanction or certify an academic area as one which merits support. On the other hand, as it is the intent of the academic plan to chart a strategic direction for the college's academic future, the more a proposed academic area fulfills these criteria, the greater the likelihood it will be endorsed by the college.

Third, the manner in which the six criteria are presented is not intended to be reflective of a hierarchy of importance. Particular criteria may emerge as vital measures of one new program's value while other criteria may serve such a role for another program.

The following section is a discussion of the six proposed criteria.

Criterion 1: Advances or is consistent with the college's mission and core values

In determining how we select specific areas of academic programs on which to focus, we are advised to rededicate ourselves to the core values of our institution. These historic commitments are embedded in every facet of what we do, and help to carry on the tradition of innovation, access and experimentation which has defined the college's mission since its inception. The core values of the college are at the forefront of criteria for the selection of curricular areas that receive attention. This is not simply to retain tradition for tradition's sake, but rather to carry forward into the future that which we most cherish. It is, thus, a retrospective as well as a prospective process, reflecting on who we have been and what we have cared about, how we represent ourselves to the larger academic universe, and imagining how that identity can be preserved and extended through the promotion of particular academic areas.

Examples of criteria we might deploy as a means of realizing our core values include those which:

- Evaluate potential academic programs for their capacity to respond to students' needs to both obtain a degree that offers them marketable skills as well as a strong liberal arts background;
- Allow for collaborative and innovative approaches to learning between students and mentors, as well as student-to-student;
- Recognize that there are a wide variety of learning styles which need to be fostered and supported;
- Understand that learning takes place in a variety of contexts, communities and environments, as well as more traditional academic settings, and offers multiple opportunities to do so; and
- Respond to the needs of a diverse student body and actively encourages that diversity through outreach and recruitment.

These examples are not exhaustive but are meant to be illustrative, and are part of an ongoing conversation about how we might promote those initiatives that could best realize our core values as we move forward as an institution.

Criterion 2: Supports the college's strategic plan and other major college and SUNY initiatives and mandates

Each academic program is enriched to the extent it is informed by and supports the strategic direction of the college and, more broadly, the SUNY system. For example, Vision 2015 articulates a bold agenda of growth and a strengthened commitment to develop our distinction as an innovative learning organization. "The Power of SUNY: Strategic Plan 2010 and Beyond" includes the goals of broadening institutional capabilities relative to online learning and bolstering SUNY's role in the realm of international programs. Such emphases constitute central elements in SUNY Empire State College's ability to fulfill a commitment to become an "open university." We also are uniquely positioned to realize efficiencies within and across the SUNY system, an objective made more achievable by interdisciplinary approaches to program planning, development and implementation.

The direction established by the strategic plans of the college and SUNY present opportunities for expanding on the strengths and assets of the college, and most particularly for enhancing the "networked" nature of the college. As we make progress toward the goal of becoming an open university, we may dedicate ourselves to expanding our network of partnerships with other academic institutions that may join with us in providing educational services to students. The college already has a presence in a multiplicity of communities by serving a geographically diverse student population. Here, too, the network of communities is intended to expand as our student population reflects increasing diversity of academic and professional interests and as the communities they represent are of a progressively global character. Finally, partnerships with a broad array of organizations – including professional, business and civic, and on local, regional, national and international bases – create exceptional opportunities for attracting students and providing them with resources and experiences which boost the comprehensiveness of their education.

Criterion 3: Represents a growth area or economic opportunity

Shifts in, and trends related to the economy, culture, technology, educational delivery systems and formats, business and commerce, international relations, politics, and globalization are creating or enhancing opportunities for academic concentration. Like every academic institution, Empire State College cannot capitalize on every trend. Yet, as the college moves toward fulfilling the imperatives established by Vision 2015, we should be mindful of how our programs may align with particular trends so that we can satisfy our commitment to promoting student success. Have we focused attention on building an academic program which enables a broad complement of our students to move into the next stage of their lives more fully prepared to make a contribution to their organizations, professions, communities and fellow citizens? Curricular areas which correspond to growth trends are important in this regard.

Yet, it should be emphasized that the term "growth" need not be restricted to the favorable economic potential of a given field, but rather to a more comprehensive range of societal activity and thought whose importance – whether for economic, political, cultural, moral, scientific or global reasons –

is growing. Accordingly, not all curricular areas identified for support hold the identical promise for job growth or material prosperity for our graduates. Yet, all represent fields with an expanding range of opportunity.

It is recommended that we remain vigilant in seeking to support curricular proposals which allow the college and our students to make substantive contributions to their fields, especially in fields which have an increasing role in, or influence on society. The eight curricular areas for support were identified, in part, because of their prominence and stature in society, as well as their ability to benefit the economic interests of the college.

Criterion 4: Integrates effectively with other curricular areas and is conducive to interdisciplinary approaches to program and curriculum development

The desire for a more interdisciplinary approach to planning and delivering educational services has been expressed in multiple forums with consistency and enthusiasm. Benefits accrue to students and faculty. Our commitments to students – particularly because of our adult-learner student body – are served more generously to the extent we provide unrestricted access to relevant learning opportunities wherever they occur in the college. In a similar fashion, our commitments to faculty – especially with respect to professional development – are strengthened to the extent we can engage one another more fully in collaborative endeavors.

Therefore, it is proposed that curricular areas which complement or integrate with other areas will receive more favorable attention. The eight themes proposed for academic emphasis share the potential for mutually influencing one another. The educational cachet of each academic area is enriched to the degree it is informed by the other areas. Consider these examples:

- The range of possibilities for managing in a health care environment is broadened when students become aware of health care policies and practices in globally diverse settings, as well as understand how emerging information system technologies affect patients' ease of obtaining care across a spectrum of health care organizations.
- Sustainability constitutes both an area of study as well as a theme with relevance to all other curricular areas.
- The impact on labor of shifts in the world economy, emerging technologies and modifications of consumer needs is quite considerable. The distribution of labor on a global basis and its relationship to business as the 21st century progresses relate well to the interconnectedness of the proposed areas of curricular emphasis.

Criterion 5: Reflects and builds on the expertise of our faculty

Empire State College has a rich and diverse scholarly community, comprising faculty who often have prior experiences as practitioners in their respective fields and now are engaged actively in teaching and scholarship. In choosing which academic areas to focus on, it is, therefore, desirable to draw upon the expertise of the current faculty who are accomplished already in their fields, and who are poised to make further contributions in their given areas. At the same time, it is useful to view this criterion as a vehicle by which to identify where investments should be made to further develop the faculty, as well as to guide future hiring decisions, based on the need to augment certain areas. One of the guiding principles in adopting this criterion is that it implicitly endorses the idea that Empire State College is one college. The expertise of the faculty is, thus, a shared resource, and can be drawn upon by various

parts of the college. In addition to being a collective resource, this criterion also reflects on the ways in which these resources can be supplemented further by combining and pooling resources with other curricular areas. Thus, this criterion also supports the idea of sharing among, as well as within, specific curricular areas. Finally, this criterion also assumes that while it is important to build on the strengths the college already possesses, new curricular areas might be identified as potential sites of growth and student need. Thus, this criterion should be viewed as an invitation to consolidate the expertise of the faculty in the service of the whole college, while, at the same time, to map out where that expertise might reasonably be built further, based on curricular concentrations that have been identified as potential growth areas for the college. (See also Section 3, Faculty Planning and Development.)

Criterion 6: Serves students' needs for increasingly diverse programmatic options

The majority of students enrolled in higher educational institutions participate in traditional degree programs, including associates, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral. However, colleges and universities across the country – indeed across the globe – more and more have been offering additional options for students who seek a college experience but for whom this traditional format is not suited maximally to their educational needs. Accordingly, less traditional formats as dual degree programs, accelerated programs and certificate programs are gaining a stronger foothold in the menu of degree options. Colleges and universities benefit from taking a more flexible approach in constructing such opportunities for students; it allows for program customization and affords students more flexibility to link their educational experiences to other aspects of their lives, including family and work. Such flexibility is particularly important to adult learners whose lives are more layered and established than students who make relatively immediate transitions from high school into higher education.

Particular attributes of the college, along with emerging needs of students, would encourage us to consider how less traditional degree options could benefit our students. First, our students do not gather as a community but, for the most part, remain in their communities and seek to adapt their educational experience to their existing work and family life structures. Second, our educational delivery system, with its emphasis on technology, permits flexibility in educational design and how we interact with students. Third, the history and practice of degree planning enables us to approach the student as an individual, with distinct needs and goals, and fosters an atmosphere of individualization and customization. Fourth, our curricula are expanding in directions appropriate for less traditional degree options, from certificates to accelerated, joint undergraduate/graduate programs. Surely, there are important issues to consider as the college evaluates the development and implementation of less traditional degree options. For example, one risk is that such options can encroach on other, more standard degree programs. If done effectively, the opposite should occur. For example, students who enter the college for a certificate may be guided to consider enrollment in a more advanced degree program. A second risk relates to the ease with which particular options can be developed, particularly certificates. Such relative ease may generate a temptation to introduce them without proper consideration of the resources necessary to execute curriculum development and instruction with quality and sensitivity to workload. A third example is that since certain options may have less rigorous application and acceptance criteria, there is the risk of bringing in students who, if integrated with students in traditional degree programs, could dilute the academic standards vital to the educational experience of our student body.

Goal A2: Establish a Thematic Approach to Academic Planning

Objective A2.1: Create a framework for guiding the academic direction of the college

In constructing a framework for an academic direction for the college, the academic plan seeks to preserve the integrity of the college's existing programmatic structure while guiding the college toward the achievement of important new goals. Traditional academic disciplines assume definition and character from an accumulation of knowledge, meaning and perspectives in a context of environmental and societal conditions and trends. Disciplines also influence, and are influenced by, other disciplines with which they align, whether circumstantially or fundamentally. The academic plan acknowledges these principles of academic life and seeks to build on them.

The college's academic plan envisions a future rooted in the premise that the effectiveness of the college rests on maximizing the complementariness of disciplines – that is, the extent to which we discover common ground among our disciplines and areas of study when collaboration is necessary to meet the evolving needs of our students. The proposed themes are not meant to eliminate or supplant the college's existing areas of study. Rather, a thematic approach is meant to complement our current areas of study and provide creative new perspectives to enhance academic planning for the future.

Thus, the academic plan proposes a ***thematic*** approach to academic planning. Themes encompass and interweave among disciplinary, programmatic, center and area of study domains and may be defined as ***cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary topics which reflect the educational needs and professional interests of our students, which emanate from growth sectors of the economy or trends of societal importance, and which allow the college to capitalize on faculty expertise and preserve core college values.***

The eight themes identified by the task force may constitute or influence the subject matter of college studies and courses, promote cross-disciplinary initiatives, serve as the basis of program development, enable the college to promote areas of distinction, encourage research initiatives, and provide guidance on organizing the future composition of college faculty. They are intended to build upon and strengthen the outstanding work performed by our college faculty and staff. The themes include:

- Initiatives in Human Services
- Globalization
- Environmental Sustainability
- Communication, Media and The Arts
- Business in the 21st Century
- Initiatives in Health Care
- Technology, Information and Society
- Adult Learning and Education

For ease of review, abbreviated descriptions of each theme follow. The complete discussion of each theme, including the rationale for the theme's inclusion in this plan as well as programs and initiatives associated with the theme, appears in Appendix A.

Initiatives in Human Services

Initiatives in Human Services continues the college's dedication to promote and sustain safe and healthy environments, enhance and support the physical, social and emotional well-being of individuals and families, promote an understanding and appreciation for diversity, and advance issues of social justice and equality. Initiatives in Human Services prepares students for a wide range of careers at the professional and paraprofessional levels within private and public sectors, including fields of practice such as community service, criminal justice, mental health, addictions, emergency and disaster management, health, disabilities and educational services. These fields impact every age and developmental stage, from pre-natal to the elderly. Depending on particular interests and goals, students are prepared to engage in professional roles, including direct practice, administration/ management, program/organizational development, community development, social action, advocacy and/or policy development.

Globalization

A leading commitment of the college is to foster critical reflective inquiry that encourages active engagement in the local and the global community. The Globalization refers to academic endeavors which encourage the participation in and contributions of students and faculty to a global civil society and to a global economy, to impact positive social change. This thematic thread moves throughout the college, from increasing global awareness in individual studies, through concentration and programmatic directions, and through specialized residencies, international travel, specialized international programs and international faculty collaboration. Globalization could have several key dimensions: globalization and faculty/professional interests; globalization and our academic programs; globalization and our student population; and globalization and a connected community. Globalization involves a collegewide commitment to treat global issues with balance and sensitivity.

Environmental Sustainability

Environmental Sustainability is the study of one or a combination of the many factors contributing to environmental deterioration or to environmental improvement. This theme fits with the college's mission, whether as a focus for a student-designed concentration or as a topic of study which strengthens such a concentration. Environmental Sustainability includes a vast range of critical issues, from energy policy to food consumption, recycling to transportation, individual choices to the global economy, and, as such, possibilities for academic studies are myriad. For example, degree programs in science, mathematics and technology might include a study of global climate change, demonstrating the broader context in which science and technology operate. Additionally, related policy studies can play a significant role in political science, public policy, science and business programs. Environmental sustainability is already an important component of many degree programs in business and labor studies, and is recognized increasingly as a necessary component of strategic planning, economic analysis and product development. Also, environmental justice is one of several avenues through which human services programs examine this theme.

Communication, Media and The Arts

Communication, Media and The Arts draws largely on the liberal arts, fine arts and humanities traditions of the college. It explores the role of the arts and media in helping human beings understand and communicate their life experiences. Encompassing other areas as well – including the human and natural sciences and business – this theme allows students to explore how human beings experience

media and the arts, and how changes in media and the arts create new forms of communication processes between individuals, groups and societies. Students who pursue this theme might, by way of example, study such problems as the ways in which globalization has had an impact on ethnic and cultural minorities; how the media communicates the challenges posed by globalization; and what the influence of cultural products from the first world is on the third world. Development of this theme would allow students to strengthen their employment potential by providing them with learning opportunities and skill acquisition experiences which support professional development in fields such as media production, journalism, public relations and advertising, broadcast media, digital media, graphic design and digital performance.

Business in the 21st Century

Business in the 21st Century reaffirms the college's commitment to prepare students for professional capacities of leadership, management and relevant support roles in a wide assortment of industries and organizations in an increasingly global environment. Business continues to be a vital academic area at the college, and a broad array of concentrations is represented in undergraduate and graduate offerings. As such, students have the opportunity to learn and strengthen competencies for their development across an expansive landscape of business professions. These include, but are not limited to, accounting, business administration, business policy, economics, health care management, human resources management, employee relations, international business, labor studies, management, nonprofit administration, operations management, marketing, social policy, supply chain management and telecommunications. The breadth of concentrations, coupled with the varied degree options for students interested in studying business, attest to the college's capacity for preparing students to enter or advance in diverse areas in the world of business.

Initiatives in Health Care

Initiatives in Health Care refers to the collection of the college's programs, courses and other educational services – both current and proposed – designed to prepare students for careers and/or professional development in various segments of the health care industry. Multiple career tracks are represented by the college's programs which span clinical, administrative/management, health science, policy development and public health directions. Given the comprehensiveness of the college's health care education initiatives, students at Empire State College are prepared to contribute to this vast and expanding industry in diverse and important ways.

Technology, Information and Society

A critical area of study in today's ever-growing world, Technology, Information and Society supports the college's obligation to be innovative and on the cutting edge of technological change. This academic theme encompasses the technological, as well as social, cultural, historic and economic contexts of computing and information. Concentrations include computer science, information systems, information technology, informatics and information science, but also can include more individualized and creative concentrations such as human-computer interaction and the information society. This theme also would address relationships between relevant technological change and society, such as those associated with the explosive Internet-driven availability of information in today's world.

Adult Learning and Education

Adult Learning and Education reflects the college's traditional area of strength in serving the needs of adult learners, and valuing their personal and professional experiences as part of their academic journey. It also encompasses the more recent ways in which the college is preparing educators who work with students across the lifespan, in both formal and informal settings, and private and public institutions. By offering a range of undergraduate and graduate degree program options which are flexible in terms of content and delivery mode, this goal can be realized. This approach underscores our commitment to being an "innovative learning organization" with "offerings that clearly reflect the changing needs of learners and society." A concentration in educational studies supplements several other areas of study which provide the content specialization required for those interested in continuing with graduate K-12 teacher certification programs.

Objective A2.2: Create an institute for liberal arts and sciences (ILAS)

In honor of the college's longstanding commitment to, and excellence in the interdisciplinary liberal arts and sciences, as well as the college's commitment to individualized learning, the academic plan supports the creation of an institute that would help to organize the college's efforts to continue to foster excellence, creativity and innovation in the interdisciplinary liberal arts and sciences. This institute would be responsible for initiatives that provide unique, creative opportunities for students to engage with mentors in the design of learning opportunities and highly individualized programs in the interdisciplinary liberal arts. It also would sponsor professional development in the liberal arts, including – but not limited to – reassignments and professional development opportunities for faculty to create open educational resources (OERs); opportunities for faculty to pursue their own professional interdisciplinary development; and the ability to host SUNY-wide or international conferences on relevant topics. The institute also would pursue external funding in support of these and other opportunities identified within the academic plan. In short, the institute's mission would be to foster the forms of interdisciplinary critical thinking that form the foundation of both professional opportunities in an information/learning economy and the habits of lifelong inquiry and learning. The activities of the institute would be hosted by an open learning environment, and would make full and creative use of emergent technologies.

Theme B: Environments for Mentoring, Teaching and Learning

Introduction

As a college, we seek to practice and discover new and diverse modes of teaching and learning that will serve the interests and needs of both students and faculty. Thus the academic plan seeks to encourage innovation, creativity and assessment-based teaching practices in a variety of modes or settings. Towards that end, this section of the academic plan focuses on ways to enrich the mentoring, teaching and learning environments for all, emphasizing collaborative partnerships (between students and faculty, between students and staff, between faculty and staff, and among faculty), both across centers and across graduate and undergraduate programs. Additionally, the academic plan supports the use of creative and effective assessment methodologies to enhance this work. In this section, we define "learning environments" as the total academic, technological, physical and social infrastructure necessary to support profound experiences of mentoring, teaching and learning.

There are four primary goals focusing on enriching the environments within which we learn, teach and mentor. The first goal, to create effective, rich and flexible learning environments, addresses the range of issues identified across all areas of infrastructure – academic, technological, physical and social – that comprise and support what we have termed "learning environments." The second goal, to enhance academic assessment, preparation and support, focuses on ensuring the academic success of all students – both undergraduate and graduate – through the early identification of appropriate levels of academic readiness, and then providing the appropriate support for those students throughout their educational careers at the college. The third goal, to enhance educational planning for students in relevant programs, focuses on a core value and practice of the college. The fourth goal, to improve the prior learning assessment and academic review process, is related clearly to the third focusing on educational planning. However, as prior learning assessment is such a critically important area of academic expertise and process for the college, we sought to highlight its importance as a unique goal.

Goal B1: Create Effective, Rich and Flexible Learning Environments

Objective B1.1: Integrate outcomes assessment and data analysis at the individual, course and programmatic level

As the Middle States Report urges us, our work must not be done in a vacuum, and we must seek to "close the loop" through assessment and data analysis. This connects to Vision 2015's strategies of ensuring "academic quality by closing the loop between outcomes, assessment, program review and accreditation, and student learning" (A.1.4) and "assess, revise and improve our areas of study on a cyclical basis" (A.1.11).

The academic plan calls for a thorough review, analysis and assessment of the current undergraduate areas of study as a means to understand how and if they continue to benefit our students and faculty. While visionary in the years that they were created – when disciplinary silos were the standard in higher education – interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary work is recognized more now and even institutionalized within higher education. Additionally, the work of various groups across the college in the past two years, including that of the Academic Conference and All Areas of Study, has highlighted a desire on the part of the faculty for this review and analysis of our current areas of study.

Secondly we endorse the Middle States call for linking student learning outcomes to assessment and program review. We must recognize that done properly, assessment requires resources. In order to be effective and efficient, this work requires data collection at multiple levels and the availability of tools to do the analysis. It also requires time for the parties involved to assess the outcomes and evaluate the findings, and then to synthesize this new knowledge into further refinements. This work is necessary to close the loop and support the foundation of current and future planning. Toward this end, the academic plan supports the work of CUSP-PA, and calls for its institutionalization as a standing governance committee (see also Academic Program section). We also seek to support the work of the Center for Planning and Institutional Effectiveness (CPIE) to implement assessment at multiple levels, including the General Education Assessment Review (GEAR), assessment in the major and of the AOS. We also endorse the development of ePortfolios as a tool to support integrative student learning, as well as forming the basis of effective assessment of learning.

Indeed, the 2011 June Academic Conference initiated this work with a discussion of what our students need to know to be prepared for life in the 21st century. This discussion of an "educated person" will lead to the identification of institutional-level learning goals for our students, and this, in turn, will help faculty and academic professionals transition to a subsequent discussion of program-level learning outcomes by areas of study, even as deans and associate deans lead faculty discussions on learning design and learning outcomes at the course – and course ¬– activity level. In this way, the college seeks to develop a first iteration of an integrated outcomes assessment framework by 2013, to be revised and improved in subsequent years.

Objective B1.2: Enhance the use of technologies to support mentoring, teaching and learning

The overall purpose of this objective is to have the mentor and learner supported in a constructive educational environment that promotes robust, effective interactions. Critical issues include integration and access to educational technologies; technology training and support for students and faculty; and the fostering of innovation through continuing experimentation with, and adoption of new technologies. In short, the Plan calls for a collegewide focus on enhancing students' and mentors' effective access to, and use of various academic technologies, including the library, instructional design support and open learning objects and repositories.

There are critically important issues of technology integration, access, functionality, user education and training, and usability, as elaborated in the Blue Ribbon Task Force report in 2010. We seek to improve systemwide design and cross-design among the college's Learning Management System (LMS), its library, open resources, local resources, etc. These are all important concerns for the development and use of the learning environments we are describing. Specifically, though, we must point out that to create and use these environments requires instructional design support to develop and maintain the resource. It also requires training for all faculty involved with using these resources, including training for adjuncts. Students also must be provided with the training necessary to access these resources.

The college needs to enhance and support open and blended learning, because we expect it to promote and enrich opportunities for students' learning, addressing both access and quality. Critically important activities include those that support information literacy and/or technological literacy through increased exposure and enriched experiences for students. Additionally, we believe that an emphasis on open and blended learning will help manage faculty workload by providing options for

more structured teaching and learning environments where appropriate. In addition to fully online modes of learning, open and blended modes will create and enrich face-to-face learning experiences by enhancing the resources provided to all of our students.

We also propose developing a system that would allocate limited and specialized faculty expertise more efficiently to learners who would benefit most. For example, how might we better coordinate the work of faculty with math expertise to meet the needs of students at the introductory and most advanced levels, both regionally and online? (See Faculty Planning and Development, Assess the State of the Faculty section).

Finally, in terms of undergraduate educational planning, Notes DP, DP Planner and PLA Planner are currently separate applications that need to be linked with single sign-on and improved consistency. In addition, there is no technology application to house the rationale essay. The academic plan calls for the development of a degree audit system that should be implemented collegewide and utilized at the earliest point in a student's educational experience. Additionally, the college will benefit from the use of ePortfolio tools to enhance students' degree planning experience abd facilitate the assessment of student learning outcomes in an efficient and effective way.

Objective B1.3: Create welcoming environments

To create effective, rich and flexible learning environments, academic environments must be welcoming to all students, faculty and staff. As an institution of higher education, we seek to foster an academic and workplace climate that exhibits the following characteristics: the practice of free and open speech, particularly with regard to academic matters; a will to resolve knotty issues by inclusive and respectful debate; time to resolve these issues; and, finally, respect for all members of the college community, including faculty, professional employees, support staff, students and alumni.

At the most basic level, the college as an organization must constantly strive to foster civility, and the Senate's Ad Hoc Committee on Civility has initiated this important work by providing introductory level training on civility awareness for college employees. The academic plan supports the development of additional training programs on advanced issues of civility, including the effective management of meetings, and tools for helping college members address incivility when it happens to them or others in their immediate surroundings. Finally, the academic plan seeks the institutionalization of this training for all employees and the extension of it to students.

Beyond institutionalizing a climate that is both respectful and civil, a welcoming environment is one that also celebrates and honors differences within and between various groups. The academic plan seeks to honor the diversity of our various communities by supporting the following initiatives: recruiting and retaining members of diverse groups to the college, including both students and employees; enhancing diversity in academic instruction and planning; and creating supports for student and alumni activities that celebrate difference.

Objective B1.4: Implement improved planning and design of physical locations

The overall objective is for the Office of Academic Affairs and the Office of Administration to collaborate to create sets of standards, best practices, and teaching, learning and service objectives that incorporate new design models systematically deployed across the college. Procedures for consultation at all levels of users need to be built in. Units, as well as centers, need to be considered. The planning and design of new or renovated college locations – including floor plans, furniture and infrastructure – must create the highest quality environment. The physical environment should support student learning and faculty and student collaboration. The infrastructure should include current technology for administrative and educational uses – such as high speed Internet access, wireless and presentation equipment –installed before occupancy or systematically during renovation, rather than retro-fitted. As the college is aware, attention must be paid to accommodating disabilities in the design of the physical environment.

The academic plan endorses the concept of developing regional hubs among the regional centers. These "hubs" would include faculty and staff from the Center for Distance Learning, the School for Graduate Studies, The Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies, and the regional center to better recruit, serve and retain students, while creating a culture of collaboration among faculty and staff.

Finally, the Academic Plan proposes incorporating – but also extending beyond – current models of mentor-student interaction and the concurrent development of physical spaces that support multiple modes of interaction. Thus, planning must consider needs of one mentor, working with a single student, but also the development of more collective and collaboratively-oriented learning environments. This has happened at certain new locations and needs to be institutionalized and implemented systematically collegewide adjusting for local conditions. Examples of new ideas include collaborative spaces of various sizes with various equipment for face-to-face and distance conferencing (Center for Distance Learning, 113 West Ave.); one-stop student service and support areas (model for Genesee Valley Center); and modular online learning environments – such as a wireless laboratory environment with moveable furniture that can be configured for individuals, one-to-one academic coaching and study group learning on demand. The plan also endorses "signature rooms" that can serve as art galleries, small-scale performance spaces and can accommodate orientations and special events, as well as instructional needs.

Goal B2: Enhance Academic Assessment, Preparation and Support for Students from Admission to Graduation

Empire State College has embraced a mission to serve people with a wide range of academic skills and preparedness. At both graduate and undergraduate levels, we recruit, admit and serve people who have experienced diverse educational trajectories, and who are trying to achieve diverse personal and professional goals. Because Empire State College has embraced an educational model that is unique in ways that create challenges as well as opportunities for students, we must embrace some responsibilities in terms of admissions, orientation, skills assessment and developmental learner support. That is, we must determine what our students need to prosper academically, and then we must plan to provide what they need. In short, the academic plan calls for enhanced academic assessment, preparation and support for all students from admission to graduation.

Objective B2.1: Build better admission policies and procedures

For undergraduate students, little is done to ensure that each admitted student has adequate reading and writing skills to meet the demands of our dispersed and flexible environment. We are nearly open-access, requiring only a high school diploma or GED and a small writing sample for admission. This policy of nearly-but-not-quite-fully open admission, combined with insufficient resources to determine and meet students' needs, can only have adverse effects on student experience, student retention and faculty and staff work load. It also creates a concomitant ethical concern about admitting students who might not be able to benefit from our educational programs.

As the college grows, it will become even more necessary to determine at the point of admission which prospective undergraduate students can succeed without academic support, which can succeed with it, and which cannot succeed. We need reliable admissions standards that are appropriately indexed to our degree offerings. Transfer students for whom only advanced-level studies or courses will move them toward completion must be able to write at an advanced level, for example. This point only emphasizes the need for careful, data-driven assessments of our current admissions practices in order to build something better for our future. The level(s) of our admissions standards will govern the degree to which we will have to develop programmatic developmental supports, as well as the resources that will have to be devoted to such supports, both in development and in deployment.

The environment that suits all shareholders best, including faculty, students and staff, is one with an optimal balance of recruitment with retention of students to graduation. This balance may be achieved in many ways, but certainly in part by admitting students who are, or who can be, prepared for work in this open and flexible environment. This aspect of the plan must be developed in coming years, as the Committee on Undergraduate Studies (CUSP) undertakes its review of the current undergraduate admissions policy. Once any new admissions policies have been ratified, then developments in academic assessments and support can be developed in meaningful ways.

Objective B2.2: Assess the academic skills of undergraduate and graduate students in the pre-enrollment period

Historically, the college has served the needs of people who may have been unserved or underserved by other colleges during their educational career. As at every college, at the undergraduate level, some percentage of students arrives with moderate to severe deficits in any of a number of skills areas. These may include but are not limited to reading, writing, computer skills, information literacy skills, critical thinking and math. Although admission to graduate programs is more selective, graduate faculty have raised concerns about the readiness of admitted students to succeed, particularly in terms of reading, writing and conducting research at the graduate level as well. It remains true at any level that without skills assessment, the first studies or courses taken by students become de facto assessments of their readiness for their programs. In terms of their academic persistence and development, this does not serve students well.

Even students who come in with relatively strong skills might look to improve their skills in meaningful ways. Depending on decisions regarding the current admissions policies, process and criteria, we propose that a set of skills assessment tools be adopted for college use. These tools should be made available to undergraduate students subsequent to admission, to be used in consultation with college staff – notably mentors and directors of academic support or their designees – as the core of rigorous developmental planning.

To date, directors of academic support, who are professionally responsible for assessing the skills and meeting the developmental needs of undergraduate students, have been hired at the seven regional centers, The Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies and the Center for Distance Learning. Some of these directors also serve graduate students if the situation arises and resources permit it, but others do not. This situation violates desired codes of consistency across the college.

One initial and necessary task is, thus, to survey the needs of the graduate students. Evidence, (including a report issued by the graduate faculty), suggests that there are gaps between the skills of some incoming graduate students and the requirements of their programs. We must determine how to deploy services to meet these needs. For instance, one way of serving graduate students might be to widen the purview of the current directors, while providing more resources and learning coaches to continue to meet the needs of undergraduate students. Another option might be to hire a collegewide director of graduate academic support and provide substantial "cloud" resources to that person to meet the needs of graduate students.

Objective B2.3: Make orientation make a difference

The college's virtue –meeting the needs of students who are not well served by other institutions – also creates a responsibility to introduce new students meaningfully to this highly unusual educational environment. We cannot expect students to understand this place when they arrive here, as their understanding and expectations will be predicated on experiences at other types of schools and/or hearsay – or, with luck, by attendance at an information session.

Orientation, which is an important function at every college, is even more important for students new to Empire State College. For this reason, a number of groups – including the student services professionals and the directors of academic support, as well as faculty – have been studying how to convert orientation from a single event into an ongoing process. Our goal is to find ways to scaffold the information delivery in order to prepare students step-by-step to become fully functioning independent learners.

During 2010 - 2011, the student services professionals (SSPs) have compiled and analyzed data from orientations across the college at the undergraduate level. This project recently culminated in a report that has been submitted to the deans for consideration. As they become available, recommendations stemming from this project should be incorporated into this academic plan and its iterations.

In addition to the SSPs' plans for orientation, and dovetailing neatly with the college's plan to create a culture of assessment, students from the point of first contact may be encouraged and supported as part of an extended orientation process to assess and periodically reassess their own academic skills through the work of the directors of academic support. As discussed elsewhere, this will help them to determine their specific strengths and challenges before beginning their studies and then as they continue, thus enhancing their academic self-development during their time at the college.

Objective B2.4: Support students academically

Student success may be defined in various ways. On the one hand, we might look at measures of student engagement, persistence and satisfaction with their academic programs. Studies completed at other colleges suggest that students who access a wide range of available services are more apt to persist than those who access fewer services. Accepting this, the directors of academic support at Empire State College recommend the following strategies which are endorsed by this academic plan:

- Increase student access to, and utilization of, academic support resources by following the lead of our librarians, for example, who have created and marketed the Library Skills Workshops and have worked to increase their accessibility to all students using technology.
- Through partnership with faculty, embed skill development/academic support "across the curriculum" and develop academic support resources for targeted studies, including introductory, advanced-level and AOS-specific studies.
- Provide from accessible and creative supports in addition to faculty support, to rich and rigorous studies that may benefit students at all developmental levels and in all programs. CDL's new peer tutoring program is one model of such a support. Similar programs might be developed in other centers, and students across the college should be encouraged to participate, either as users or producers of the services.

Additionally, the academic plan endorses the work of the Student Success and Retention Task Force 2011. The charge to the group is to conduct a systematic review and empirical analysis of critical student service touch-points, potential barriers to success and successful interventions across the range of the Empire State College experience, and to make recommendations for enhancing student success and retention. The task force's report was completed in Fall 2011 and includes: a review of current college practice and college research; an external literature review; new research design and analysis, including student and faculty/staff input across a wide constituency of the college; and data-driven recommendations for optimizing key services and structures. The Academic Planning Task Force supports the implementation of the anticipated recommendations.

Goal B3: Enhance Educational Planning for Relevant Undergraduate and Graduate Programs

An important component of the academic plan is to enhance educational planning to support undergraduate student success and degree completion. Educational planning is both the study and the process through which students create an individualized degree plan. Most of the undergraduates at the college, including those at the Center for Distance Learning and the seven regional centers, take part in individualized degree planning. We recognize that The Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies offers a structured associate degree program for electrical worker apprentices and individualized bachelor's degrees, and that the School for Graduate Studies primarily offers structured degrees and certificates. The HVACLS and SGS faculty, while not directly involved in educational planning with their students, share the college's core values of recognizing the experiential learning that students bring to their formal learning, and cultivating students as independent lifelong learners, both essential components of educational planning.

Indeed, educational planning, both in terms of the process of individualized degree program planning for students and in terms of the study itself, remains a foundational value of the college, even as educational planning practices raise issues and concerns that must be addressed in an academic plan. The Academic Planning Task Force recognizes and applauds the ongoing work by the Office of Collegewide Academic Review, directors of academic review, the directors of academic support working group and the Center for Mentoring and Learning, aimed at strengthening and improving educational planning for undergraduates. In recognition of these various and important initiatives, the academic plan calls for enhancing educational planning for those centers and programs that require educational planning of their students.

Objective B3.1: Analyze the impact of enrollment growth on effective educational planning through data-driven analysis

There are broad concerns across the college as enrollment growth has created pressures on faculty, professional and support staff as they strive to meet the needs of their students. Discussions across the college have raised concerns that this growth has impacted the provision of educational planning to our students. An analysis of institutional data is needed to determine whether, for example, students' completion rates in educational planning studies have been affected. Also, research is needed to determine whether, and if so how, enrollment growth has affected mentors' practice with regards to educational planning. The goal of these analyses is to inform a review and strengthening of educational planning policy, a task that will be undertaken by the Committee on Undergraduate Studies and Policies within the timeframe of this plan.

Objective B3.2: Work toward consistency and transparency to enhance academic quality

Enhancing students' ability to understand and engage with the process of educational planning – such that it adds value rather than becoming a barrier – is a desirable outcome. Effective and timely achievement of the educational planning sequence (from completion of the study to completion of the portfolio and its submission, evaluation of PLA requests, faculty review and concurred degree programs) are all critically important outcomes. There are proposals to review current models and begin to identify best practices across centers, by mentors as well as directors of academic review. The Center for Mentoring and Learning and the Office of Collegewide Academic Review will provide leadership for this effort.

Objective B3.3: Explore and disseminate diverse models of delivery of educational planning

Multiple ways of delivering educational planning exist and should continue to exist across the college, but in a more planned and shared environment. In particular, the college will benefit from an exploration of the complete range of educational planning practice, including individualized, semi-structured and almost fully structured degree plans. Again, the Center for Mentoring and Learning will provide leadership in the effort to identify which models of delivery meet the criteria of supporting core values, supporting student academic success and utilizing innovative approaches. An extended orientation that transitions to educational planning falls within these efforts, and, as noted in other sections of this plan, ePortfolios are effective tools for both delivering educational planning and assessing student learning and college practice.

Goal B4: Improve the Prior Learning Assessment and Academic Review Processes

SUNY Empire State College is an acknowledged leader in the assessment of learning acquired outside of the academy; we have 40 years of experience helping students identify what they know and what they need to know. As higher education increasingly recognizes the validity and promise of PLA, Empire State College will remain a leader in the field, and PLA will remain central to our mission. Moreover, the college's approach to PLA supports the college's core value of individualization. It provides students with the opportunity to utilize knowledge gained from nontraditional sources in their degree plans, allowing them to focus on new areas of learning and facilitating earlier degree completion.

The Council on Adult Experiential Learning (CAEL) has found positive relationships between student degree retention and completion and the use of PLA. The college's PLA program includes learning that has been pre-evaluated by accepted external sources (ACE and NPONSI) and specific sources of learning that the college itself has evaluated (generics). Students also may choose to seek individual evaluation of learning that is applicable to their degree programs but has not been pre-evaluated by the college or external sources. The majority of students using PLA do so through this individualized assessment process.

The Office of Collegewide Academic Review (OCAR) and the Center Offices of Academic Review (COARs) have been active at both the local and institutional level in maintaining and strengthening this process through activities that include, but are not limited to, the development of local evaluator training, developing an online collegewide training format, engaging in research around evaluation, developing a collegewide evaluator data base, and offering student workshops and supporting materials.

While there are many strengths in the college's PLA model, there also are some concerns about consistency and equity of practice across the college, and how to best ensure the quality of the outcomes. The academic plan seeks to ensure our historic institutional commitment for PLA and address those issues and concerns that impact academic quality.

Objective B4.1: Understand current practice

We need to systematically study our PLA practices as an institution in order to facilitate clearer and more academically sound practices. Many of our processes are grounded in historical practices rather than a true understanding of their current effectiveness. The college needs a better picture of which practices are presently in place across centers and their overall effectiveness in terms of degree program planning and student success. The development of PLA requests has been criticized for being too cumbersome, as well as difficult for students to complete; further exploration needs to take place to determine more effective ways for students to develop their requests, such as the use of ePortfolios.

As part of understanding our practices, a clearer appraisal of the mentoring process for PLA needs to occur. Currently, very little is known about the ways in which faculty mentor students through the PLA process and how this facilitates PLA request completion. In addition, little is known about the actual evaluation process itself. Research is needed to better understand the impact of the assessment process on student success.

Objective B4.2: Reinforce the central role of mentors through professional development

Currently, each center's Office of Academic Review offers orientation and training to new mentors on PLA, and the Center for Mentoring and Learning offers workshops across the college. In addition, institutional development for new mentors and ongoing faculty development should have a sufficient focus on PLA. There is a concern that new mentors may not have the tools to help their students identify and develop PLA requests outside of their area of expertise. Also, faculty assessing PLA requests do so in addition to their current workload assignments, which means some faculty have less time to commit to evaluating PLA requests.

There is a general sense that workload issues may be impacting the effectiveness of the assessment process. High demand areas for PLA evaluation have created an inequitable distribution of work for faculty mentors, and alternative strategies need to be developed to ensure these areas are covered without an undue burden on particular faculty. Faculty development opportunities and workload assignments need to place PLA request development and assessment as valued components of faculty professional obligation.

Finally, the college always will need to turn to external evaluators in particular areas of expertise; therefore, further evaluator training needs to be in place from a collegewide perspective. In addition, for certain high request areas, the college might consider training a cohort of evaluators to ensure expertise in assessing specific topics. The area of studies could play a more central role in developing guidelines and assessment information for some topic areas that are in high demand.

Objective B4.3: Communicate more clearly with students about the value and place of PLA

The college also needs to determine realistic evaluation strategies and expectations from the student perspective. The college needs to explore ways to sustain PLA practices without compromising its integrity and to make sure that students understand these practices. Most degree program publications and web-based materials focus on the specifics of the degree program planning process, and very little is available to students to communicate collegewide expectations and guidance related to preparing a PLA request and engaging in the assessment interview. In some cases, individual faculty have developed materials to support this process, but little has been done to collect these valuable resources to share with other faculty. Collegewide, web-based materials need to be developed to support the PLA process more effectively.

Objective B4.4: Address fiscal implications for PLA

The fees associated with the PLA process have not been reviewed in many years, and initial assessments indicate that the fee structure no longer adequately supports the work on prior learning assessment that is completed by the college as a service to students. The college needs to examine the fee structure for the individual evaluation of prior learning (IEF) and payment levels for external evaluators. It is critically important to ensure that our process is cost effective for students, but also that our fees generate the revenue to support the process itself. We also support the effort to establish consistent and equitable payments to external evaluators at a level that is fiscally feasible and a fair compensation to attract and retain quality external evaluators.

Objective B4.5: Support the development of Empire State College generics

The college needs to provide sufficient resources to maintain the currency of existing generic evaluations and to develop additional "generics" (specific sources of learning that the college itself has evaluated). As we develop more partnerships and outreach to companies and organizations, there is an increased need for the college to expand its own inventory of generic evaluations. Generics, if they can be maintained for currency, offer students a more direct path to incorporate PLA within their degree programs. The college also needs to expand its partnerships with other colleges and organizations which also evaluate learning to provide access to other pre-evaluated learning possibilities. Pre-evaluated learning provides effective means to assess student learning in areas that are consistently in demand and provides a recruitment tool targeting students employed in certain industries and occupations.

Objective B4.6: Enhance degree program review and approval

In 2008, the college adopted its current Policy and Procedures for Degree Program and Portfolio Review and Approval, which applies to students' individual degree program proposals and portfolios. The goals of this policy are to promote quality and consistency with college policy in student degree programs and portfolios; ensure timely approval of student degree programs and portfolios; and clarify the process for students, faculty and staff. The policy was crafted in such a way as to support center-specific conventions, as the center assessment committee reviews and approves the degree program proposal and portfolio at the center level, on behalf of the college faculty as a whole. Approval by the committee is required before a degree program proposal and portfolio can be forwarded to the Office of Collegewide Academic Review. The expectation is that committee decisions strive for objectivity, within the context of the student's academic and professional goals, college policy and AOS guidelines. The center director of academic review's role, as a standing member on all center review committees, is to promote continuity and consistency in center judgments in relation to college policy. OCAR is responsible for ensuring compliance with college policy and approves the portfolio, at which point the degree program plan is concurred and becomes official. Some individual centers also have developed various quality review strategies. The degree program also is reviewed at the point of graduation recommendation to ensure that the student has met all college academic requirements. Since development and review of an individualized degree program is central to the college's mission, the college needs to develop ways to assess the extent to which center-specific practices do or do not support quality, consistency and timely review.

Additionally, there are a range of issues that the college needs to consider at an institutional level in order to enhance the degree program review process. Each area of study has developed its own style of guidelines, and some are more open-ended than others. There is continued debate on how to interpret these guidelines and whether they are to be interpreted as requirements, guides or suggestions. The lack of clarity around the purpose and varying interpretation of the guidelines leads to confusion among students, faculty, the center assessment committees and assessment professionals. The individual and center-based interpretations vary across the college. Additionally, interpretation of the guidelines raises challenges for students and primary mentors in developing degree programs and writing the degree program rationale, even as committees struggle with understanding and interpreting guidelines, particularly if the student's area of study falls outside of committee member's area of study. In short, the college needs to examine the different practices across the college and determine the best way to present and actualize the guidelines to ensure equity and consistency for

all students. In addition, AOSs need to examine their guidelines from the perspective of the student, and seek input from students, mentors and assessment professionals to identify issues that arise in interpretation during the development of the degree program and review.

Faculty development for the degree planning process is addressed by the college in a number of ways. At a center level, the center office of academic review often plays a primary role in orienting new mentors to program review and their roles as center assessment committee members. The CML offers additional orientation to new mentors (which includes degree planning and PLA requests) and offers collegewide workshops on educational planning and PLA. However, little has been done to provide professional development for the center assessment committees at a collegewide level. In addition, the committees operate in a vacuum from each other, depending solely on the directors of academic review to ensure consistency across committees within a particular center, and there are no mechanisms in place to ensure consistency across centers. Thus, overall center assessment committee practices need to be explored and strategies for improvement shared.

Timeliness of the degree program development and review is another important factor that impacts student success and satisfaction. When programs are submitted and reviewed during the students' last or near last enrollment, there is very little time to make changes to the students' degree program, especially when they think they have completed all of their requirements and will be graduating. Students become frustrated when they discover that they still have requirements to fulfill. Committees can feel caught in a bind and may approve programs that would not have been approved or would have received conditional approval, if submitted earlier. Recent data analysis indicates an increase in degree programs concurred within the last 16 credits instead of a decrease. Technologies have not been developed to provide accurate, up-to-date information regarding student progress, which would help faculty and center academic review offices appropriately advise students on their status. The college needs to examine practices to determine why there is an increase in untimely concurrences and develop strategies to help students establish their programs earlier in their tenure.

With student enrollments increasing, all centers are experiencing an increase in degree programs submitted for approval. For example, overall the college experienced a 10 percent increase in concurred degrees in 2010 – 2011, as compared to 2009 - 2010. The college needs to examine the sustainability of current practices and seek new ways to effectively handle the volume of degree program reviews while maintaining quality and timeliness. In addition, there is a dearth of information regarding students who never complete the degree program submission, review and approval process. Further exploration into established practices and student persistence needs to take place in order to determine how to improve degree program review and approval.

Objective B4.7: Enhance graduation review processes and develop a degree audit system

All centers are charged with developing a process by which a student's degree program is reconciled with completed Empire State College studies, determining if the completed program meets college policy, and if the changes in Empire State College studies continue to fall within the parameters of what the committee has determined to be an approved program. In addition, the Office of the Registrar is responsible for the final academic technical graduation review. The way in which centers address graduation review processes varies in terms of who is responsible for graduation review, the role that they play in the process, and what kinds of resources, if any, are available to them. Some

centers also have instituted a pre-graduation review completed at a predetermined credit level, in order to identify changes that will impact degree completion. This gives students time to make necessary changes.

Currently, there are no technological systems in place to monitor student progress or to identify a student for graduation or pregraduation review. As a result, much of the graduation review processes are done manually or through work-around procedures. An analysis of center practices would help identify ways in which technology could support the degree completion and review processes, but perhaps, most importantly, the college needs to implement an effective degree audit system to support the monitoring of students' academic progress.

Theme C: Faculty Planning and Development

Introduction

The practice of mentoring serves as both a historical hallmark and a philosophical touchstone of the college. While faculty do play diverse roles across the college as mentors, in relation to specific programs and modes of study, the ability to plan for a faculty body that both engages effectively and expertly in the practice of mentoring and brings the academic expertise to build and sustain excellence in academic programs is critical. Thus, this section of the academic plan focuses on the need for collective planning to shape the faculty body, and the ways the college needs to address the ongoing support and professional development of faculty mentors.

Goal C1: Ensure that Our Faculty Have the Content and Practice Expertise Necessary to Serve the Current and Future Needs of Students

The first section of the academic plan proposes academic themes for future program development and criteria for deciding which programs will be developed. The second section focuses on the environments within which our faculty mentor, teach and learn. The purpose of this section is to set out the questions and processes necessary to ensure that the college will have the faculty expertise required to support current as well as future learners in their academic endeavors.

Objective C1.1: Ascertain the current state of the faculty

Faculty expertise at Empire State College is complex; while faculty at all institutions must have mastery of subject matter and engage in scholarly activity, faculty at Empire State College have a broader mandate. Our faculty must engage in scholarly activity, but also develop expertise in a number of areas: working with adult learners in the practice of mentoring and in the design of undergraduate degree programs; and developing knowledge of the specific program(s) in which they work, and in the evaluation of experiential learning. Finally, the faculty must have expertise in a range of modes of learning that utilize various forms of educational technology.

First, it makes sense to consider the faculty of the college as the faculty of the whole college. More specifically, if we are to plan for the academic future of the college, we will need to understand the current composition of our faculty, and what areas of expertise or interest they hold.

Faculty expertise

What subject matter expertise do we have in terms of teaching and learning? On the one hand, our present area of study (AOS) may be too broad to describe faculty knowledge areas accurately; on the other hand, many faculty are working in multidisciplinary fields which cross AOS boundaries. More specifically, we need to document the areas where faculty are engaged in scholarship. As an example, one theme mentioned earlier in this document is Adult Learning and Education. We should be able to identify easily who among the faculty is engaged in scholarly work in this area. We need to identify our areas of distinction in scholarship.

Distribution of faculty among programs

We need to document the distribution of faculty among programs, including formal shared appointments and informal cross-center and program mentoring. For example, it is important to know how many faculty are doing a significant amount of work with students outside of their own location or program and whether or how it might be recognized. While another task force is working to develop new models for distributing faculty expertise across the college, answers to these questions should inform that work.

Faculty expertise in practice-based knowledge and how we identify "experts"

We need to determine who has "expertise" in individual degree planning at the undergraduate level among the faculty and who has "expertise" in working with Master of Arts in Liberal Studies (MALS) students in the design of programs. Again, we need to develop a process to determine expertise or other specialized practice-based knowledge that is determined to be critical.

Faculty evaluation of experiential learning

There is a need to determine the proportion of full-time faculty, part-time faculty and outside evaluators who are engaged in developing and assessing prior learning. Moreover, the distribution of prior learning assessment (PLA) requests across subject expertise is critical to determining where additional resources might be needed. It also would be useful to know who is helping learners develop their experiential learning requests, including full-time faculty, part-time faculty and/or outside evaluators.

Objective C1.2: Analyze and recommend optimal configurations to meet the current and proposed needs of the college

Once the current state of the faculty is known, there are two basic questions: how well does the current faculty serve the needs of current students, and how can the future faculty serve the needs of future students?

Current faculty serving current students

We need to determine whether we currently are meeting the needs of our students by subject area, in terms of whether there are gaps in service delivery. The college's plan for faculty hiring needs to be evaluated in terms of whether to continue to utilize the model of having at least one full-time subject matter specialist per AOS in each regional center, or to consider developing a new and different model for hiring. It is critical to determine an effective means of identifying an optimal configuration of current faculty across all subject areas or identified trends in student interests. Critical consideration needs to be given to the role of full- and part-time faculty, as well as adjuncts and professional employees.

Future faculty serving future students

Anticipated student needs should be considered in faculty planning at the college. In addition, it is critical to ensure that the current faculty complement is sufficient to meet the workload needs of the college. Strategic planning needs to play a role in how that faculty complement can or should change as the anticipated growth unfolds over the next five years. It is critical

to address in a strategic manner the optimal configuration of faculty across all subject areas based on anticipated trends in enrollment over the next five years. It also is critical to determine the needs and roles of full-time faculty, or line-appointed part-time faculty, adjuncts and academic professionals.

Objective C1.3: Develop and resource a five-year plan for faculty hiring

Developing a plan to hire faculty clearly must wait until the data have been analyzed, gaps identified, and opportunities for further growth evaluated. In addition, there are processes that must be addressed in order to ensure that appropriate stakeholders have a voice in recruitment and hiring decisions. For example, search procedures should be revised to make sure that search committees for faculty positions which serve more than one program include appropriate members from the various programs. Procedures also need to be developed to support newly hired faculty in negotiating the competing demands of multiple programs, since learner success will depend on faculty success.

Objective C1.4: Develop guidelines to integrate faculty planning into new academic program development

Programs that are proposed at any level of the college need to be vetted in light of faculty areas of expertise, needs across the college, anticipated and unanticipated workload requirements, and the faculty hiring plan detailed previously. While the criteria for new program development include faculty strengths, this section also recommends looking at a new program in the context of all of the competing roles and responsibilities of those faculty.

A governance consultation process should be implemented to ensure that deans, executives, or anyone with an immediate need to act on a program opportunity presents his or her proposal to an appropriate academic body before extensive preparation moves forward. This group should be charged with ensuring adherence to the goals and plan identified previously, taking into account optimal faculty configurations, funding, effects on existing faculty and professional structures of shifting resources to new programs, optimal ways of carrying out mentoring/instruction, and related issues, as well as developing a set of guidelines to integrate faculty planning into new academic program development.

Goal C2: Support Faculty Development in Terms of Scholarship and Practice

In this section, we outline how the college might maintain and sustain faculty in developing the subject matter (both disciplinary and interdisciplinary) and practice expertise necessary to support existing and future academic programs in a variety of modes of learning.

The challenge for faculty at our institution is that they must work to develop not only subject matter expertise, but also expertise in adult learning; in practice-based knowledge (particularly in the primary mentoring role, that is, supporting students in the design of their own degree programs); knowledge of the specific program(s) in which they work; and in the evaluation of experiential learning. Faculty must have sufficient facility with multiple technologies to support their work with students in a range of modes of learning. Some of this knowledge can be gained only through work in one's program; other knowledge can be supported and shared more widely. The Center for Mentoring and Learning

(CML) is the college office responsible for faculty orientation and development in terms of the practice of mentoring, and the college professor for adult learning and mentoring also works to support and promote faculty achievement in the area of adult learning.

Objective C2.1: Promote scholarly activity as an integral part of mastery of subject matter and teaching effectiveness

Scholarly engagement is beneficial to faculty, students, the institution and to society. As faculty engage in scholarly pursuits, they bring their new learning to their interactions with students. At the same time, as new knowledge is created, the broader community benefits. Finally, scholarly activity sustains faculty in their own lives.

We recognize the importance of the link between scholarly activity and teaching/mentoring. We need to promote scholarly activity as an integral part of mastery of subject matter and teaching effectiveness. Faculty development through scholarship contributes to the ways in which mentors fulfill their roles. We need systematic approaches to promote and publicize faculty innovation in teaching and mentoring, viewed as a dimension of scholarship. In addition, it is important to understand the link between faculty development activities (conferences, workshops, presentations, publications and training) and how knowledge gained from these activities is used in mentoring/teaching. The Open University model offers an opportunity to combine the mentor model, statewide presence and the ability to go national and international, using multiple technologies.

In addition to enhancing faculty work with students, scholarship is valued for its contribution to the growth of societal knowledge. As faculty develop increasing expertise in their own subject matter, they must share that knowledge with others in their field in order for the broader community to benefit.

The Center for Mentoring and Learning and the Office of the CPALM have identified a gap in support of faculty's disciplinary/interdisciplinary scholarship and recommend explicit consideration of where and how the institutional support for faculty's scholarship in their fields of study should occur.

Objective C2.2: Encourage and support collaboration

While collaboration in mentoring and learning are supported through collegewide residencies and other endeavors, these connections should be further enhanced. The more faculty work with others, the less isolated they are in their discipline. In addition, part-time or adjunct faculty should be supported in terms of collaborative scholarly activity.

Objective C2.3: Identify and optimize the resources for faculty development

Resources for faculty development at the college and beyond the college must be sufficient for faculty success in terms of teaching, mentoring and scholarship. This includes sufficient support from the grants office, faculty development funding, internal seed or starter grants and reassignments/sabbaticals. In addition, funding opportunities need to be transparent, well advertised and equally distributed across the college.

Faculty development funds need to be sufficient to support both domestic and international travel for faculty to engage in innovative approaches to teaching and mentoring, and related scholarship.

In short, we need to use the most effective ways to provide faculty with up-to-date information on both internal and external funding possibilities, as well as the support to apply for these funding/ release sources. We need to ensure that the timeline/calendar for applications for funding meet the needs of the majority of faculty. Overall, we need to ensure that the current system of providing faculty development funds is sufficient, and that there is a clear understanding of the types of activities such funds can be used for. The system of fund distribution, approval criteria and process for requesting funding for faculty development should be understood clearly by all faculty.

Objective C2.4: Develop a plan and timeline to analyze and address faculty obligation in a sustainable and comprehensive sense.

The Blue Ribbon Panel recommended changes to create manageable and transparent instructional schedules to promote faculty satisfaction and to enhance opportunities for reflective mentoring and scholarly work. Faculty must be able to balance scholarly activities, teaching and mentoring, and university service successfully within the present resources of the college.

Institutional service is a particular issue at Empire State College, where innovation requires active engagement on the part of faculty in academic policy and where the number of full-time faculty may be insufficient for the task. Service is a task that requires time for reflection and articulation. It is critical that the need for faculty service be supported by the college in terms of how faculty balance service with their work with students or scholarly engagement. It also is critical to consider whether the allocation of time among the roles of the mentor should vary over the academic lifecycle to help ensure a better balance and more resources.

Objective C2.5: Examine faculty retention and reappointment success

The provost's Blue Ribbon Task Force recommendation – that Empire State College and college faculty undertake research to identify issues and problems related to recruitment and retention of high quality mentors who are prepared to engage with all of the college's multiple modes of teaching and learning – should be implemented. There is a belief among faculty that criteria for reappointment, tenure and promotion, while explained in the faculty handbook, are not clear or consistently applied. This might be alleviated by valid and transparent measures of effectiveness in teaching, service and scholarship for both full and part time faculty.

Objective C2.6: Provide ongoing support for all faculty and academic professional employees in terms of their ongoing learning, development and renewal

The college is relatively generous in its support of professional development, although that support is threatened in difficult budgetary times. We urge the college leadership to continue supporting professional development to the widest extent possible.

Objective C2.7: Leadership in adult learning

It is vital that we strengthen SUNY Empire State College's leadership and recognition in adult and higher education, which would include highlighting our flexible, progressive and technology-enhanced approaches to learning. This includes the need to support research, presentations, publication and grant writing as related to mentoring, teaching and learning, as well as supporting the work of the

CPALM in relation to research and publication. As stated in Vision 2015, the college's goal is to "build and sustain a comprehensive, coherent approach to the scholarship of mentoring and learning, other mission-related research; and to ways of sharing and disseminating the results."

Objective C2.8: continue to support "new" mentor orientation

Newly hired, full-time mentors participate in a series of workshops and conversations designed to introduce them to the college's philosophies of mentoring, to various parts of the college, and to each other. It is becoming clear that one year of "new mentor" training may not be sufficient. The college should follow up with mentors after their first year to ascertain their need for ongoing faculty development in terms of mentoring. Additionally, we support CML's plans to extend training to part-time and adjunct faculty.

Objective C2.9: Explore "continuing" mentor training

The Center for Mentoring and Learning (CML) provides workshops for continuing mentor training in areas that the college has considered critical: educational planning (undergraduate), prior learning assessment (PLA), academic skill development and blended learning. CML plans to increase its offerings to other areas of mentoring, as well. It is critical that there is an increased participation of both new and experienced mentors in activities coordinated by the Center for Mentoring and Learning to both pass on what is known and to challenge current practice with new ideas.

APPENDIX A: THEMES

Initiatives in Human Services

Description and Scope

Initiatives in Human Services as a programmatic focus prepares students for a wide range of careers at the professional and paraprofessional levels within private and public sectors. Human services cuts across a wide range of fields of practice such as community service, criminal justice, mental health, addictions, emergency and disaster management, health, disabilities and educational services. These fields of practice intersect every age and developmental stage from pre-natal to the elderly. Students, depending on particular interests and goals, prepare to engage in professional roles including direct practice, administration/management, program/organizational development, community development, social action, advocacy and/or policy development. From a thematic perspective, Initiatives in Human Services seeks: to promote and sustain safe and healthy environments; to enhance and support the physical, social and emotional well-being of individuals and families; to promote an understanding and appreciation for diversity; and to advance issues of social justice and equality.

Rationale

The goals of Human services support and advance the college's mission to "actively engage in sustaining and seeking to improve a challenging, diverse and problematic world." Students at Empire State College are prepared to address the complex and changing social issues facing society and its members. As an institution, Empire State College is committed to providing "the education they (learners) need to thrive as individuals, as members of communities, as active citizens and as agents of change." Many students come to the college already employed within some area of the human services field. They are rooted to the communities they live and work in. The knowledge, values and skill sets they gain contribute not only to their own professional advancement and economic lives, but enhance the organizations and communities where they work and live.

Human services represents the second largest area of study for students seeking degrees at Empire State College. The college has demonstrated its support to the educational needs of human service professionals by offering educational options of the A.A./A.S. and B.A./B.S. within a structured, registered area of study. The college has made the commitment to this theme through hiring of full-time and part-time faculty that are not only academic experts but often bring a strong practice base of experience to their mentoring role. Human services intersects both at the program level and thematically with other areas of study such as Social Theory, Social Structure and Change, and Human Development. A solid foundation in the liberal arts offered by the college is essential preparation. Students interested in managerial/administrative roles engage in studies within business, and, in turn, business students interested in the nonprofit sector incorporate various studies in human services within their program design.

From a growth perspective, the employment of social and human services professionals and assistants is expected to grow faster than the average for all occupations, in large part due to the aging population and increased demand in the fields of mental health, substance abuse treatment, correctional services and emergency and disaster management.

Programs and Initiatives

Human services extends across undergraduate curricula preparing students at professional level (bachelor's) and paraprofessional level (associate) through individually planned concentrations, a collection of studies offered through individualized study, and weekend/thematic residencies. Most students prepare concentrations that are professional, thematic or problem oriented. The identification of curricular themes can support a more deliberate focus on interdisciplinary preparation that weaves through themes of globalization, sustainability, health care and business.

A number of potential initiatives within this theme could be explored for their feasibility and fit within the mission of the college, resource availability, growth potential and community needs. These initiatives might include, but are not limited to:

- A planned transitional path for students interested in policy to our graduate program in Social Policy
- Students interested in graduate work, who now have to turn to external institutions. Based on student interest and occupational growth trends, the college might explore paths to graduate programs in such areas as human services, social work, gerontology, public health and mental health. Both an online model and/or a blended model would be very appealing to working adults. Current programs and proposed graduate initiatives in business and health care could provide an opportunity for combined graduate degrees, for example an MSW/MBA or Master's in Human Services/MBA.
- Selective certificate programs that offer another path of access for students to increase their knowledge and skill level within a particular area; open additional employment opportunities; and support community organizations in upgrading employees' professional skills. Planned certificates can serve as a pathway for students into higher education or transition from the associate degree to a bachelor's degree or graduate education.
- Examination of the present AOS in Community and Human Services to determine how best to address the challenges to professional/occupational identity, and degree program development and review – presented by the increased number of concentrations in environmental health and safety, public safety, emergency management, homeland security and law enforcement. For example, in response to these challenges, discussion is under way for a new AOS in Public Affairs.

Globalization

Description and Scope

A leading commitment of the college is to foster critical reflective inquiry that encourages active engagement in the local and the global community. The function of the college education includes programs that encourage the participation and contributions of students and faculty to a global civil society and to a global economy to impact positive social change. This thematic thread moves throughout the college, from increasing global awareness in individual studies, through concentration and programmatic directions, through specialized residencies, international travel, specialized international programs and international faculty collaboration. The globalization theme could have several key dimensions: globalization and faculty/professional interests; globalization and our academic programs; globalization and our student population; and globalization and a connected community.

We aspire to create a broadly well-informed and sensitive portfolio aimed at serving many constituencies. This must involve a collegewide commitment to treating global issues with balance and sensitivity. Emergent directions could include more deliberate seeking of external resources to expand international and global directions. Examples of individual faculty work abound, from cross location instruction in Panama and Lebanon, or training of faculty in Belarus in online education, or faculty work with international residencies, and through our international partnerships. NYC as a world destination learning center and our work with immigrant populations around the state could be expanded. These and other projects could be focused for a more deliberate and larger focus. Interested faculty might develop and promote a special Empire State College perspective on this topic through an Empire State College planned academic Institute of Globalization Studies. Empire State College could contribute and provide a leadership role by engaging in discussions of the divergent perspectives related to the changing globalized world.

There also may be opportunities to develop studies (blended and online) to deliver Empire State College studies in the Spanish language, particularly in high need areas such as business, human services and health care. While the college currently does not have much expertise, there are partnership opportunities with other institutions for development, and grant resources are available. Resources are available through businesses and foundations for work in BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China.) With limited resources, Empire State College needs to focus on a select number of opportunities where we have interested faculty who want to play a leadership role in development. Empire State College's approach to prior learning assessment and degree planning has a natural fit with international planning. The lack of structured curricula allows us to be more creative in working with learners or collaborators from other parts of the world, to recognize and be responsive with open minds.

Rationale

The strategic plan points to changing economic and societal trends and the need for understanding global perspectives, and possibly creating employment opportunities for graduates. It also reaffirms the commitment of the college to foster critical reflective inquiry that encourages active engagement in the local and the global community. One of SUNY's six big ideas is dedicated to SUNY and the World, focusing on the removal of barriers of geography and time, identifying Empire State College as positioned to play a pivotal role in a global SUNY. With BME as the largest area of study by both graduate and undergraduate students, the inclusion of concentrations, certificates, residencies and other opportunities are of greater interest. Faculty in many other areas of interest also have developed or are interested in developing studies beyond the borders of the United States, generally in partnership with learners and faculty in other countries.

Programs and Initiatives

Global perspectives are addressed in most undergraduate areas of study, and are emphasized in most graduate programs. From general education, to areas of study, to concentration guidelines, interdisciplinary and disciplinary perspectives stress the need for increased global perspectives.

The college also has particular programs that emphasize global perspectives. For example, International Programs has offered blended programs in Europe, the Middle East and Central America. These programs have been designed for students who have not had access to flexible bachelor's degree programs in their own countries, and who possibly lack the resources to travel to another country

where higher education is more available. As a result, the program has been particularly suitable for women students who may have been denied opportunities. The International Programs faculty and staff have proposed expansion in Central and South America. There also are opportunities to partner with other SUNY schools for completion of a two-year degree in the home country, one year at a distance with Empire State College and one year in residence at another SUNY campus. The School for Graduate Studies has several emergent programs with a strong global perspective. Increased concentrations and residencies integrating global and international perspectives are an opportunity to expanding the career interests of our students. Empire State College also may be suited ideally to blending opportunities where students work or volunteer internationally, and complete degrees at a distance.

Environmental Sustainability

Description

Environmental sustainability as an academic theme is the study of any one or a combination of some of the many factors that contribute to environmental deterioration or to environmental improvement. Factors that impact sustainability range from energy policy to food consumption, from recycling to transportation, from individual choices to the global economy. Clearly we could name more factors, but the point is obvious: the study of environmental sustainability includes a vast range of critical issues.

Scope

The possibilities for academic studies that focus on environmental sustainability are almost numberless. In fact, the theme easily fits into all of Empire State College's areas of study, whether as a focus for a student-designed concentration or as a topic of study that strengthens such a concentration. Some instances are obvious: For degree programs in Science, Mathematics and Technology, for example, a study of global climate change demonstrates the broader context in which science and technology operate. And to stay with that same topic, policy studies related to it can play a significant role in political science, public policy, science and business programs. In business and labor studies, environmental sustainability is already an important component of many degree programs, and it is recognized increasingly as a necessary component of strategic planning, economic analysis and product development. Environmental justice is one of several avenues through which human services programs examine this theme.

Other instances, though perhaps less obvious, are nevertheless significant. Arts degree programs can examine the relationship between how art is conceived, planned, designed, delivered and supported from an environmental perspective, and the environment can be an artistic theme itself. Literature programs can examine how nature and environmental degradation are presented in literature and/or analyze nature literature. History, philosophy, education, social sciences, human development – all these general areas have important environmental sustainability dimensions.

The college already promotes this theme in its academic program: We have a long standing and successful Environmental Studies Residency, with a new Urban Environmental Studies Residency making its debut this year. There are still other ideas among faculty for residencies that focus on sustainability itself. Looking to the future, the Environmental Sustainability Committee plans to develop workshops to support and encourage faculty in designing sustainability-related courses and course modules. In addition, the college can (should) include environmental sustainability

in its description of its educational objectives ("an educated person" – see the following for more). Finally, an even more definitive indication that the college takes this theme seriously would be if each set of undergraduate Area of Study Guidelines included the expectation that each student include a study of it in their concentration.

Rationale

The college should make environmental sustainability one of the central themes of its academic program, for several interrelated reasons:

First, it is generally agreed that the world faces unprecedented environmental problems. Whatever side one wishes to take on the many debates about those problems, they still pose challenges to the world that will require the thought and action of all citizens – but especially of educated citizens – who need to have at least a basic understanding of those issues in order to participate in the formulation of action plans.

Second, as David Orr has pointed out in his writings, when education and educators communicate subject matter, it says as much about the importance of what is left out as it does about what is included. At present, by saying little beyond what ecology courses and a small number of other courses contain, most college programs say to their students that environmental problems are unimportant. Most disciplines present themselves as if the wider natural world has nothing to do with their subject matter, yet that is very far from true. (See previous Scope section.)

Third, this college advocates lifelong learning and celebrates the connections our students make between their studies and the larger world. Yet in the face of massive environmental challenges, we do not ask them to begin, or continue, creating a foundation of knowledge of these vital aspects of 21st century existence, or to connect their other studies with sustainability issues.

Fourth, these are issues that pervade every aspect of existence. If we humans do not attend to environmental issues in a committed, serious way, all of society and nature are threatened, thereby threatening the very contexts in which to address those other issues. For confirmation, one need only look at the moderate – as opposed to the radical – projections about the effects of global climate change to see how the world will change. A related point is that almost all social issues connect directly to environmental ones. For example, it will be the disadvantaged and disenfranchised who will suffer first – and likely the most – from environmental disaster; so justice issues are included very definitely in what we mean by environmental issues. Even if one disagrees with this scenario, it remains necessary for our students to become informed about its multiple facets in order to enter the debates – whether global or local – in an informed manner.

Finally, the college is a member of the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE), and President Davis is a signatory of the American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment (ACUPCC). Both of those memberships commit the college not only to reducing the environmental impact of its far-flung operations, but also to increasing its academic environmental sustainability offerings.

Communication, Media and The Arts

Description and Scope

Communication, Media and The Arts, broadly understood, explores the role of the arts and media in helping human beings understand and communicate their lived experiences. Drawing largely on the liberal arts, fine arts and humanities traditions of the college – as well as encompassing other areas, including the human and natural sciences and business – this theme allows students to explore how human beings experience media and the arts, and how changes in media and the arts create new forms of communication processes between individuals, groups and societies.

At the same time, this theme takes seriously the college's mission and core value that students should learn about and understand their communities through studying the culture that is produced and disseminated by their immediate environments. Themes that draw on communication and culture, therefore, allow students to make sense of their lived experiences, and, at the same time, help translate and enrich those experiences for others in their communities.

While promoting an understanding of their civic duty and their place in the global community, this theme also supports the college's strategic plan to foster student engagement in research that is global in its scope, as a way to honor our commitment to be concerned and involved world citizens. Students who pursue this theme might, therefore, study such problems as the ways in which globalization has had an impact on ethnic and cultural minorities; how the media communicates the challenges posed by globalization; what the influence of cultural products from the first world is on the third world, and so on.

Another direction of the college, and articulated in the SUNY strategic plan, is to engage students in online learning opportunities to help establish a link between SUNY and international programs. This reflects Empire State College's unique model of open learning and its capacity to eliminate the barriers of time and space through delivering learning in an online environment. This theme could be deployed effectively in the service of this objective, both in terms of exploring the theoretical and practical issues involved in designing online learning environments, as well as in thinking about the ways in which the new media technologies have created a different social landscape for learning at the college level.

Students have been able to draw on the rich array of faculty expertise that already exists in the college in such distinct areas as the arts, the humanities and social sciences – as well as more professional fields such as journalism and business – to pursue concentrations that fall within the scope of this theme. For example, the college has ample faculty in such areas as creative writing and poetry, ethnomusicology and music business arts management, as well as such areas as stage movement and theatre, including acting, directing and theatre tech. There also are faculty who have worked with students in oral history, documentary photography and fine arts photography. The college possesses, finally, unique resources in understanding the psychodynamic, social justice and rehabilitative uses of theatre, visual art practices and performance.

In addition to the college's strengths in the arts, we also have faculty who have expertise in the traditional humanities – including philosophy and literature, as well as the social sciences, including psychology and sociology, to more professional fields such as communications or journalism. Students have been able to pursue concentrations that draw on this theme, finally, in more interdisciplinary areas such as American studies, ethnicity and global studies. The theme of communication, media and

the arts allows for a broad investigation of theoretical debates, as well as contemporary scholarship in media studies, communications, public history and the arts and related fields. Finally, this theme can help to provide a multidisciplinary approach to explore the implications of a changing media landscape and how this translates into communicating ideas in an increasingly complex society.

Rationale

We are living in a period of rapid globalization, in which individual human interactions, markets and cultural values are increasingly mediated by new tools that facilitate communication and the flow of information. Yet, information itself does not constitute either knowledge or wisdom. The variety and ubiquity of media prompt us to consider its influence on our lives. As an institution of higher learning, it is, therefore, critical that we take the lead in facilitating a better understanding of how societies represent themselves, with the goal of improving how we communicate ideas across global, temporal and geographical divides. In so doing, this theme also can help enhance the college's reputation for research and scholarship, as well as honor its commitment to promoting social justice through articulating the historical and social circumstances in which power and identity are transmitted and communicated to larger audiences.

Another critical aspect of the college's mission is that we should be able to respond to students' needs for a degree that can offer them marketable skills, as well as a strong liberal arts background. As an institution, Empire State College has demonstrated its ongoing commitment to support the economic and cultural development of our students and the communities in which they reside through providing them with access to affordable and high-quality educational opportunities. The theme of communication, media and the arts fulfills these goals by allowing students to pursue an intellectually challenging academic program that provides them with the theoretical skills to understand complex media environments, while at the same time helping them to apply these skills to everyday life.

In practice, many of the students who come to Empire State College would like to become producers of media, including learning the skills to be journalists, public relations or advertising professionals, broadcasters, digital media specialists, etc. They also may be practicing graphic studio or digital performing artists. Development of this theme would allow these students to realize their professional interests by offering them course work and learning experiences that provide them with up-to-date skills that will help them find gainful employment in these fields. This assumes that the college also will create more learning opportunities in this area, drawing on the expertise of the faculty, as well as hiring more faculty in these fields, as part of an overall commitment to supporting learners as active partners in their education within a collaborative mentoring environment.

Finally, the demand overall for degrees in cultural studies – the arts, as well as fields like history and interdisciplinary studies – continues to grow. For example, at the undergraduate level, the amount of bachelor's degrees awarded in Cultural Studies in 2009 - 2010 was 7.5 percent of the total degrees awarded; 5.4 percent of the degrees were in The Arts; Historical Studies accounted for 3.9 percent; and Interdisciplinary Studies accounted for 6.0 percent. At the graduate level, the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies accounted for 7 percent of the total degrees. These numbers suggest that there is a strong amount of interest in pursuing degrees that potentially could focus on this theme, especially when it is understood as being part of a cross-disciplinary pursuit that, combined with some of the other themes outlined in the academic plan, provides an opportunity to realize fully the academic and professional interests of our students.

There are a number of existing and proposed programs that draw on the theme of media, communication and the arts and reflect the ways in which it can be articulated for a variety of students, at both the undergraduate, as well as graduate level. There is presently a lot of work going on in community and relational art, for example, as well as in new media forms. This has allowed students to develop their competencies in these areas, as they match their interests with faculty expertise.

One specific recent initiative at the undergraduate level is a proposed Interdisciplinary Arts Residency. This will be a blended residency designed to include all areas of study and embrace the interdisciplinary nature of the arts. This residency is particularly illustrative of the kinds of interdisciplinary perspectives that the academic plan is trying to support, in that it will engage students in conversations, research and creative expression in the arts, as well as across subject areas such as business, science, history, literature, education and more.

Another recent initiative at the undergraduate level includes the development of a new track in digital performance which brings together both writing (cultural studies) students, computer science students and others who create performative work with highly digitized and multimedia technologies. It is a step on from the "performance art" world, which mixed performance and visual artists or other collaborations. This can include any media, material, oral history or other content, along with high-end multimedia-rich content integrated into a performative event.

At the graduate level, there also are proposals in various stages of development. Some of these include the plan to continue to develop interdisciplinary certificate programs that serve and support students in the MALS Program, as well as other graduate programs.

One recent certificate initiative that draws on this theme is the graduate certificate in Public History, which explores how information about the past has been collected, disseminated and preserved for the general public. The certificate draws on a wide array of studies at Empire State College to help a variety of students from different disciplines. Business students, for example, can learn about how business documents have been archived and how corporations have branded themselves through the exhibition of logos. For those who are interested in nonprofit management, in addition, there is the opportunity to learn about the not-for-profit world of museums. Students primarily interested in the public arts and how to secure funding, finally, can learn about how to design projects that combine artistic and historical goals.

Other initiatives at the graduate level include the ongoing development of relationships with the major arts communities, particularly in the Buffalo and the Metropolitan NYC areas. This also will help to foster the college's goal of becoming an "open university," by allowing students to connect with artists and practitioners outside of the college.

Business in the 21st Century

Business in the 21st century reaffirms the college's commitment to prepare students for professional capacities of leadership, management and relevant support roles in a wide assortment of industries and organizations in an increasingly global environment. In so doing, this theme seeks to uphold the

college's intent to build on its core values and history, as it looks to shape a curriculum sensitive and responsive to political, social, economic, environmental and global trends – forces our students must understand as they acquire the skills and knowledge necessary for successful careers in business.

Business has been, and continues to be, a vital academic area at Empire State College. A broad array of concentrations is represented in undergraduate and graduate offerings and, as such, students have the opportunity to learn and strengthen competencies for their development across an expansive landscape of business professions. These include, but are not limited to, accounting, business administration, business policy, economics, health care management, human resources management, employee relations, international business, labor studies, management, nonprofit administration, operations management, marketing, social policy, supply chain management and telecommunications. The breadth of concentrations, coupled with the varied degree options for students interested in studying business, attest to the college's capacity for preparing students to enter or advance in diverse areas in the world of business.

Rationale

In 2005, the first edition of The World is Flat, by Thomas Friedman, was released. Friedman sought to demonstrate that the convergence of technology, economic development, information management and increasingly ambitious aspirations of countries around the world was becoming responsible for nullifying the influence of geographical boundaries as they relate to commerce and business development. The implications for business have been profound, influencing, among other things, the culture and character of organizations; the means by which production occurs; the division and composition of labor across international lines; commerce and trade; trends toward globalization; definitions of and the relationship between leadership and management; the emergence of new markets and the dissipation of old ones; and the relationship of the worker to the organization.

The demand for business education at Empire State College has been strong traditionally and is growing, a phenomenon not surprising in light of the college's reputation in the area of business education and the need for business professionals to maintain currency of skill and knowledge in a rapidly changing business climate. The largest area of study at Empire State College is business, with approximately 40 percent of all students affiliated with Business, Management and Economics. MBA growth has occurred at double-digit levels for many of the past several years. In recognition of the importance of the study of business to society, the college has determined that sensitivity to workplace needs and goals remains a vital element of its strategic direction. Given the challenges faced by those in business professions, growth trends in business education are going to continue. For example, according to the Graduate Management Admissions Council, "more than 60 percent of master-level programs in accounting, finance and management reported increases in the number of applications in 2010, with average application numbers exceeding last year's benchmarks by 20 percent." The theme of Business in the 21st century aligns well with the strategic plan of the college by:

- helping the college serve its commitment to developing strategic alliances with members of the business community, other institutions of higher learning and government institutions
- contributing to the economic development of communities in which students live and work, as well as to New York state, by preparing students with pertinent knowledge and skills

- attracting students from diverse geographical settings and, therefore, helping to reduce cultural barriers and build a climate of understanding and cooperation
- educating students in areas of relevance to SUNY initiatives, such as how to achieve organizational efficiencies
- preparing students to think and act innovatively to improve their organizations and their communities and to undertake entrepreneurial initiatives
- assisting the college in achieving its goal of becoming an "open university" by enabling students of diverse backgrounds and locations to participate and by offering multiple degree and study options

Programs and Initiatives

A range of initiatives are in various stages of proposal and development. These reflect emphases across a continuum of global/international business to domestic/local, as well as a growing range of degree options.

- Assessment of the major in BME is in progress.
- The MBA program is scheduled for an accreditation review by the International Assembly for Collegiate Business Education (IACBE).
- An MBA in Global Leadership is in advanced approval stages at the college.
- Advanced graduate certificates in health care management, project management, human resources management, and nonprofit management were implemented in the Fall 2010 semester. Additional certificates are in various stages of conceptual and programmatic development: leadership and crisis management, financial management and analysis, information technology management, global brand marketing, information system security, and technology transfer.
- The concept for a doctorate in management (DM), a joint program with SUNYIT, has been developed.
- The reactivation of the M.A. in Business Policy Studies is under review.
- An MBA in Health care Leadership is in proposal development.
- Additional initiatives with longer-term concept development and program implementation timeframes, e.g., an MBA for J.D.s, point to a continued effort to maintain the robust nature of business offerings at the college.

The growth of the business curriculum at the college represents an exciting and opportune trend for the college. Discussion among faculty and administration is vibrant, with respect to considering ways of engaging in partnerships to develop programs that support a comprehensive range of business activity, from entrepreneurial and small business development to multinational organization leadership and management. Partnerships with chambers of commerce and organizations such as the Small Business Administration create opportunities to support students interested in advancing entrepreneurial interests and small business development. To serve the needs of students who face the challenges associated with an increasingly complex and global business environment, the college is exploring and evaluating partnerships with other degree-granting institutions – both domestic and international – which offer complementary educational opportunities, as well as dual diploma and exchange programs with offshore universities.

Growth and increasing program diversification intensify the challenge of achieving an integrated and interdisciplinary approach to program development and delivery. Of course, students benefit to the extent they have unfettered exposure to a range of curricular options. Therefore, the challenge before the college involves discovering ways for creating a climate in which learning opportunities for students are maximized, a goal best achieved in an interdisciplinary environment. Seamless transitions from undergraduate to graduate studies and certificates, as well as among areas of professional specialization, will add to the college's ability to have an important voice in discussions about the role and value of business education in the 21st century.

Initiatives in Health Care

Description and Scope

Initiatives in Health Care refers to the collection of SUNY Empire State College programs, courses and other educational services, both current and proposed, designed to prepare students for careers and/or professional development in various segments of the health care industry. Multiple career tracks are represented by the college's programs which span clinical, administrative/management, health science and public health directions. Given the comprehensiveness of the college's health care education initiatives, students at SUNY Empire State College are prepared to contribute to this vast and expanding industry in diverse and important ways.

Rationale

In 2010, approximately $2.5 trillion (17 percent of GDP) was spent on health care in the United States. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there are approximately 600,000 health care organizations in the United States, and over 14 million Americans are employed in the industry, statistics which, incidentally, do not account for the full range of industry employees, such as self-employed practitioners and small business owners. Half of the 20 fastest growing occupations are health care related. It is expected that over three million jobs in health care will be created by 2018, resulting principally from the labor needs associated with the aging population and the reform legislation passed in 2010.

Higher education bears an enormous responsibility for preparing people to enter and progress in the health care workforce. Empire State College has established a strong base in health care education and is enlarging its role as a provider of education in this area. Such a direction is consistent with the history and values of the college, as well as the direction articulated in Vision 2015. The college has a proud tradition of serving the educational needs and professional interests of adult learners, and of encouraging students to contribute to the betterment of the communities in which they live and work. Looking forward, the college is dedicated to expanding its academic program into segments of society in which growth is planned or likely to occur. An emphasis on health care provides the college with an opportunity to link its history and future in a way that strongly serves the needs of a large number of students, as well as society.

Programs and Initiatives

Existing and proposed programs extend across undergraduate and graduate curricula and address the multi-faceted nature of health care education:

- Degree programs offered to prepare individuals for careers in the clinical realm, include a B.S. in Nursing, a proposed MSN, and supplemental educational activities for radiology technicians.
- Undergraduate programs leading to a B.S. in Community and Human Services or a B.S. in Business, Management and Economics offer concentrations in health services and health care management and administration.
- Undergraduate and graduate courses in health policy, economics and management, which are expanding in number and scope, prepare students to play a more informed and skilled role in leading their organizations and influencing the direction of health care policy.
- A proposed Masters of Public Health (MPH) adds a public health focus to the college's offerings.
- An MBA in health care leadership, designed to prepare individuals for directing health care organizations, is in proposal development stage.
- An Advanced Graduate Certificate in health care management has been recently introduced.

The college is demonstrating its flexibility to address and satisfy the growing array of educational needs of health care professionals by offering multiple program options and structures (B.A./B.S., M.A./M.S./MBA, and advanced graduate certificates). In keeping with the notion of "initiatives," it is recommended that the college engage in a continuous examination of how students' needs may be met as they seek professional development in health care. Accelerated programs which allow for fluid transitions from undergraduate to graduate education, more focused and specialized certificates, and ensuring that students benefit from a community-oriented, interdisciplinary approach to health care education constitute a few ways in which the spirit of this initiative may be fulfilled.

Technology, Information and Society

Description

This academic theme encompasses the technological as well as social, cultural, historic and economic contexts of computing and information. Computer science generally focuses on computer organization, software, and mathematics. Information systems and information technology focuses on the use of computers to solve problems. Informatics deals with the intersection of computing and another domain (such as business, the fine arts or health care) and often includes a focus on social and behavioral aspects of information and technology. Information science is an interdisciplinary field that examines information systems in their social, cultural, economic, historical, legal and political contexts.

Scope

Concentrations would include computer science, information systems, information technology, informatics, and information science, but obviously can go well outside of these to include more individualized and creative concentrations such as human-computer interaction and the information society. This theme also would cover studies that address the relationships between relevant technological change and society, such as those associated with the explosive Internet-driven availability of information in today's world.

Rationale

First of all, technological literacy and information management abilities are essential skills required to successfully navigate the 21st century world, and, thus, information management is an infused competency in the SUNY general education requirements. Second, there is ever-increasing workplace demand for professionals in the computing and information fields, and the number of students doing

degree plans in these areas are growing (accounting for about 6 percent of all concurred degrees in 2009 - 2010 – the highest percentage after BME and CHS degrees). Furthermore, in all area of studies and in all industries, the need for advanced computer skills and understanding of information analysis, design and management are crucial. The Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) and Association for Information Systems (AIS) in their 2010 Curriculum Guidelines for Undergraduate Degree Programs in Information Systems indicate that:

The use of information technology is pervasive in society. The requirement of the workforce to use this technology is increasing. Users of information technology are now expected to take personal responsibility for much of what has been handled in the past by a centralized computing services unit. While many organizations provide some user training in information technology, graduates who have an in-depth understanding of the opportunities IT capabilities can provide to their organization are in a stronger position compared to their peers without this understanding. A strong, capable Information Systems program can benefit all students in a school and provide special benefits to non-majors who desire more competence in information technology and its application to their areas of interest" (p. 3).

Program Initiatives

A group of faculty is writing a concept paper for a new AOS (tentatively titled something like Computing and Information). Related development efforts in the graduate programs include a distance learning track in the M.A. in Adult Learning program, the proposed M.A. in Emerging Technologies for Teaching and Learning, and a possible certificate in I.T. Management in the MBA program.

Adult Learning and Education

Description and Scope

The theme of Adult Learning and Education reflects the college's traditional area of strength in serving the needs of adult learners, and valuing their personal and professional experiences as part of their academic journey. It also encompasses the more recent ways in which the college is preparing educators who work with students across the lifespan, in both formal and informal settings, and private and public institutions. The college accomplishes this by offering a range of undergraduate and graduate degree program options that are flexible in terms of content and delivery mode. This approach underscores our commitment to being an "innovative learning organization" with "offerings that clearly reflect the changing needs of learners and society."

At the undergraduate level, a concentration in Educational Studies serves the needs of adult educators, industry trainers, private school teachers and early childhood educators. It supplements several other areas of study that provide the content specialization required for those interested in continuing with graduate K-12 teacher certification programs. The School for Graduate Studies offers several degrees to meet the needs of educators working with students across the lifespan, in both formal and informal settings, and private and public institutions. The Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) offers middle and high school teacher certification in several content areas, and the Master of Education (M.Ed.) is a research-focused option for those in the field with additional responsibilities to teaching. The interdisciplinary program design of the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies (MALS) suits many practicing public and private school teachers, and community educators in the humanities and visual and performing arts. The Master of Arts in Adult Learning (MAAL) meets the diverse needs in the higher and

adult education sector, in state, national and international contexts. The Master of Arts in Emerging Technologies and Learning (MAETAL) provides a special focus on how the learning process, regardless of level or content, can be enhanced with new, digital technologies.

Rationale

The role of education is central to the growth and prosperity of our communities and our nation. Yet, the nature of learning and knowledge creation is changing ever more rapidly with the acceleration of globalization and technological advancements across fields. This presses us to adapt to changing dynamics that impact our lives in a myriad of ways. Learning through the lifespan sustains us, and helps us thrive across generations on several levels: personal, economic, social and cultural.

The U.S. Department of Labor estimates 10 - 23 percent job growth rates through 2018 in professions in education, including K-12 teachers, post-secondary and vocational teachers, and adult literacy instructors.[1] In addition, a private report recently commissioned by Empire State College indicates an increasing demand in the adult learning market, particularly in the northeast and New York state.[2] The decision to continue to support blended and online delivery modes for all programs is supported by the Sloan Consortium's determination that higher education online enrollments are growing at a rate of 17 percent per year (compared to 1.2 percent for the rest of higher education). The college is, thus, modeling the sort of experiences that an increasing number of professional organizations call 21st century learning.

Program Initiatives

In addition to the existing undergraduate and graduate offerings, there are several programs in development phases:

- Scheduled for launch in the fall term 2011 are: the Master of Arts in Adult Learning and a residency-based version of the Master of Arts in Teaching.
- Scheduled for launch in the fall term 2012 are: the Master of Arts in Emerging Technologies and Learning, and the Master of Education degree programs.
- Additional initiatives include developing certificates in areas such as teaching and technology.
- Longer term plans include developing doctoral programs in adult learning, and interdisciplinary studies.

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[1]   U.S. Dept of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2010). Occupational Outlook Handbook 2010 - 2011. Accessed Nov. 15, 2010 http://www.bls.gov/oco/oco1002.htm#education

[2]   Eduventures Online Higher Education Learning Collaborative (2009). Masters in Adult Learning Market Assessment: Supply and Demand. Private report commissioned by SUNY Empire State College.

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The Mission of SUNY Empire State College

SUNY Empire State College's dedicated faculty and staff use innovative, alternative and flexible approaches to open, higher education that transform people and communities by providing rigorous programs that connect individuals' unique and diverse lives to their personal learning goals.

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