

**Report to the  
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students**

**of**

**SUNY EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE  
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866**

**by**

**An Evaluation Team representing the  
Middle States Commission on Higher Education**

**Prepared after study of the institution's self-study report  
And a visit to the campus on November 1—4 2009**

**The Members of the Team**

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## **Working with the Team**

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This report represents the views of the evaluation team as interpreted by the  
Chair, and it goes directly to the institution before being considered by the  
Commission.

It is a confidential document prepared as an educational service for the benefit of  
the institution. All comments in the report are made in good faith, in an effort to  
assist SUNY Empire State College. The report is based solely on an educational  
evaluation of the institution and of the manner in which it appears to be carrying  
out its educational objectives.

## **AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT**

### **President**

Alan R. Davis

### **Chief Academic Officer**

Joyce E. Elliott, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

### **Chair, Empire State College Council**

James Lytle

## Context and Nature of the Visit

SUNY Empire State College is located at One Union Avenue, Saratoga Springs, NY. The institution, which is a public college, has a Carnegie Classification of “Master’s-Smaller Programs,” and offers Associate’s, Bachelor’s, and Master’s degrees.

SUNY Empire State College (hereafter ESC) has no branch campuses. It has 35 “additional locations,” which were approved by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education on June 30, 2009, contingent on site visits to three of these locations. It is a single, statewide institution with additional locations and instructional sites throughout the State of New York. The Team visited a number of these sites, as noted in the Evaluation Overview section of this Report.

ESC offers the following Distance Learning programs for which 50% or more of the program is offered at a distance:

Adolescent Education (MAT)  
Childhood Education (MAT)  
Business, Management, and Economics (BPS; AA;AS;BA;BS)  
Community and Human Services (AA;AS;BA;BS;BPS)  
Cultural Studies (BS; BA; AA;AS)  
Educational Studies (AA;AS; BA; BS)  
Historical Studies (BA; BS; AA; AS)  
Human Development (BA;BS;AA;AS)  
Interdisciplinary Studies (BA; AS; AA; BS;BPS)  
Labor Studies (BS; BPS; BA; AA; AS)  
Management (MBA)  
Nursing (BS Nursing)  
Science, Math, and Technology (BA; BS; AS; AA)  
Social Theory, Social Structure, and Change (BA; BS; AS; AA)  
Technology (BPB)  
The Arts (AA; AS; BS; BPS; BA)

The Self-Study process and design are based on the “Comprehensive Model.” The Team found that there is evidence of wide participation in the self-study process, with representation on the Steering Committee and the six Task Forces from all geographic and professional areas of the institution.

## **Affirmation of Continued Compliance with Requirements of Affiliation**

Based on a review of the Self-Study Report, staff and faculty interviews, and the certification statement supplied ESC, the Team affirms that the institution continues to meet the requirements of affiliation stated in *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education*.

## **Compliance with Federal Requirements**

Based on a review of the Self-Study Report, staff and faculty interviews, and the certification statement supplied by ESC, the Team affirms that the institution's Title IV cohort default rate is within federal limits. The Team also verifies that the institution meets relevant requirements under the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 regarding distance education and transfer of credit.

## Evaluation Overview

The Team is pleased to report that it has found ESC to be in compliance with all standards as set out in *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education*. The Team has made Suggestions relative to Standards 1, 7, 9, 11, 12, and 14. One Recommendation was made, this relative to Standard 3.

The Team found that there is much to commend and celebrate at ESC. In the words of one Team member, "Empire State College is obviously an institution that continues to sustain an environment the exudes the core values embodied in a mission so valued that it is woven into the very fabric of the institution itself; and into the hearts and souls of its administration, faculty, staff, and students." The Team found that progress and notable accomplishments have been made as follows:

- much progress and positive change has occurred since the last decennial visit such that there is now a widely participative governance process, which, in turn, contributes to a collegial institutional culture that should be considered a great asset;
- there has been a refinement of institutional planning and connecting that planning to decision making in such areas as enrollment management, technology, and academics;
- despite challenging economic times, ESC has exceeded its goal for fund raising and continues to make mission-driven investments in terms of human, financial, technological, and physical resources;
- ESC has strong, effective, and vital leadership, as well as staff and faculty who are truly dedicated to serving students;
- there is continuing improvement in ESC's institutional assessment capacity through the development of key performance indicators built around key strategic areas;
- there is obvious care and concern for student learning and student services, as evidenced by the creation of a vice president position to oversee enrollment services and student affairs;
- ESC has a breadth of academic offerings and flexible and creative approaches to reaching and serving students;
- great effort has gone into the identification of challenges and solutions in the areas of institutional assessment and assessment of student learning outcomes.

In making and analyzing its findings, Team members visited a 10 of ESC's locations, as well as its primary campus in Saratoga Springs, as follows:

- Albany
- Center for Distance Learning, Saratoga Springs
- Center for Graduate Programs, Saratoga Springs
- Coordinating Center, Saratoga Springs
- Latham
- Manhattan
- Newburgh
- Queensbury
- Saratoga Unit
- Schenectady
- Syracuse
- Utica

The Team found everyone who was interviewed to be cooperative and candid when answering questions and/or describing ESC, in general. The institutional Self-Study Report and the standards articulated in *Characteristics of Excellence* provided the context for the Team's evaluation of the institution.

## **Compliance with Accreditation Standards**

ESC's Self-Study Report is arranged in chapters, each of which addresses groupings of standards. After a brief introduction (Chapter 1), the Self-Study Report is constructed as follows:

Chapter 2: "Mission, Planning, and Resources" addresses Standards 1, 2, and 3

Chapter 3: "Leadership, Governance, Administration, and Integrity," addresses Standards 4, 5, and 6

Chapter 4: "Students," addresses Standards 8 and 9

Chapter 5: "Faculty" addresses Standard 10

Chapter 6: "Academic Programs," addresses Standards 11, 12, and 13

Chapter 7: "Assessment" addresses Standards 7 and 14

### **Mission, Planning, and Resources**

This section covers the following standards:

- Standard 1: Mission and Goals

- Standard 2: Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Planning
- Standard 3: Institutional Resources

**The institution meets these standards.**

**Standard 1—**

The Team found that ESC is an institution that sustains an environment that exudes the core values embodied in a mission so valued that it is woven into the very fabric of the institution, itself, and, into the hearts and souls of its administration, faculty, staff, and students. Other findings relative to Standard 1 indicate that the mission statement and the stated goals of the college are (1) known and embraced by internal and external constituents; and (2) effective tools for guiding the work of instructional personnel (mentors), professional and support services staff, institutional research staff, enrollment management personnel, and support staff. This has resulted in the development of educational products that meet the individual needs of learners. Moreover, the evaluative procedures embedded in the instructional process are consistent with the institution's mission and serve to validate the rigor of the academic programs and the efficacy of learning outcomes.

**Standard 2—**

The Team found that ESC has made significant progress on refining and institutionalizing planning and on connecting planning to institutional decision making through a broad, active, transparent, and participative process. Other findings indicate that ESC has made good efforts to use its planning process to manage enrollments, technology, government relations, marketing, and academics; to better understand student success; and to develop measures of progress such that there is a purposeful linking of strategic planning, management, and institutional improvement. Planning is mature, yet evolving. A report on ESC's process for creating a planning document, *Vision 2015*, clearly articulates goals for ESC that are realistically ambitious. The report also describes the next phase of ESC's strategic planning, which is intended to culminate in a completion of a detailed plan document covering 2010-2015.

At the time of the Team visit, this process had gotten under way. ESC staff members were commendably frank in identifying strengths, challenges, and ideas about next steps. Staff seem to be knowledgeable and productive, able to understand the importance of planning, the need to adequately resource priorities, the value of communication and collaboration, and the necessity for a long-term commitment that can nonetheless be responsive to short-term realities. In addi-



tion, ESC is developing a technology plan, a college academic plan, a government relations plan, and a marketing plan. A task force on faculty professional obligations in mentoring and teaching has also been established, and these are all appropriate and important planning components. That said, developing plans in *all* key areas and *integrating* those plans could help ESC to further leverage all of its capabilities and move the institution from strategic planning to strategic management.

### **Standard 2 Suggestion**

**The team suggests that ESC take an integrated approach to strategic planning across important functions such as budget, enrollment, academics, staffing and workload, facilities, and technology.**

### **Standard 3—**

The Team found that ESC has invested in human, financial, technological and physical resources to support its mission, in spite of severe economic conditions, and this is a valuable strategic move. Other findings indicate that the new president has responded to concerns in the college community to make the budgeting process more open and responsive. He has also initiated a comprehensive review of information technology. As a result, ESC has identified challenges related to providing technological support in a geographically dispersed institution. For example, inconsistencies among the centers regarding the way in which critical processes have been developed have complicated the way in which technology can be deployed to make them more efficient. On the other hand a recently completed a capital campaign exceeded its goals, and a method has been developed to ensure that there are sufficient faculty to work with students at all locations. In short, ESC has shown a commitment to investing in human capital to continue supporting its educational mission. And through enrollment growth and by drawing down on reserves, the College is able to allocate funds in support of strategic initiatives in spite of economic constraints. However, ESC will need to get critical information, including year-end financial data, in a timely manner as it monitors its use of funds. Likewise, as the following Recommendation implies, SUNY should consider ways of allocating resources that are compatible with the unique mission of ESC.

### **Standard 3 Recommendation**

**The Team recommends that SUNY continue to explore a more equitable way to allocate resources to Empire State College that acknowledges its unique mission.**

## **Leadership, Governance, Administration and Integrity**

This section covers the following standards:

- Standard 4: Leadership and Governance
- Standard 5: Administration
- Standard 6: Integrity

**The institution meets these standards.**

### **Standard 4—**

The Team found that much progress and positive change has occurred since the last site visit, 10 years ago. The widely participative governance process, which involves more than 50% of the faculty, contributes to a collegial culture that should be valued as an important asset. However, ESC faces challenges presented by the economy, anticipated growth in enrollment, and competing forces for faculty attention. The college will need to make use of its current strong leadership and inclusive governance to craft a future that takes into account all of these challenges and prepares the institution to respond to changing conditions. ESC leadership must innovate, prioritize, and modify as it is presented with new realities if it is to maintain the many successes already achieved and build on them. That ESC has a truly collegial culture will be a great boon to them as they do this. Likewise, the leadership of the president is very positive in this culture of participatory governance. Keeping what is valued in the face of change will test ESC, but there is no doubt that the institution can rise to the occasion.

### **Standard 5—**

The Team found that the college has attracted a loyal, hardworking, and dedicated cadre of staff and faculty who are to be commended for their focus on behalf of students. The college also has strong, effective, and vital leadership. The internal system of collegial governance is in conformity with the policies of SUNY Board of Trustees, and the roles and powers of ESC's internal system and governance structure are properly stated in the college's bylaws, posted on the college Web site, and available from the office of Academic Affairs. The college has established systems designed to make administrative operations of this multifaceted institution, with its array of centers in dispersed locations, more efficient, effective, and responsive to demand for regular data on student enrollments, student academic progress, faculty workload, and other measures of academic and administrative success.

Likewise, there is an effective administrative model that provides both local control and centralized oversight of the college's operations. This "check and balance" system regarding the management of the academic and administrative de-

partments of the college is commendable. Communication within the organization appears to be effective and efficient, and this is impressive when one considers the multiple locations of the regional centers and their satellite units. The Team found that ESC's administrators have appropriate skills, credentials, and training to carry out their responsibilities and functions and that there is adequate information and decision making systems to support the work of administrative leaders. However, the Team has concluded that the college may need to more fully address the ongoing and institutional changes confronting the college as future policies are formulated for various constituencies. Finally, the new performance evaluation system for senior administrators implemented in summer of 2009 is necessary in an institution that is decentralized.

#### **Standard 6—**

The Team found that ESC conducts its business in an honest and straightforward manner both with its students and with the public. The faculty and professional staff grievance procedures are clear and widely circulated, as is information on practices for employment, promotion, and dismissal. The college publishes and consistently administers its personnel policies and conforms to the collective bargaining agreements. Faculty members generally reported a high degree of satisfaction with areas associated with academic freedom and integrity. Ideals of academic and intellectual freedom are also responsibly communicated and celebrated among students and reflected in the college's methods of study. Finally, the Team noted that the college has appropriate processes for filing student complaints and appeals, and that these are clearly stated in the undergraduate and graduate catalogs. The catalogs also contain information on graduation rates, in yet another example of ESC's openness and candor with students, staff, and the public.

### **Students**

This section covers the following standards:

- Standard 8: Student Admissions and Retention
- Standard 9: Student Support Services

**The institution meets these standards.**

#### **Standard 8—**

The Team found that ESC has improved its ability to recruit students whose interests and goals are congruent with its mission by reorganizing and improving

services provided by its Office of Enrollment Management. The implementation of a client relationship management system and the re-design of the College Web site have been key to this improvement. Likewise, a recognition of the importance of writing skills to student success at ESC, has led to an emendation of the admissions policy such that there is now a requirement that more sophisticated procedures be used to assess the writing skills of applicants. There have also been improvements in processes for the assessment of prior learning and other methods for determining the amount of degree credit to be granted for prior learning. Such “front-end” processes, combined with enhanced services and more fully integrated technological resources, have the potential to improve time-to-degree, retention, and degree completion rates. Accurate and useful information on admissions requirements, testing, and enrollment services is available both online and in a variety of print materials. Finally, the creation of the position of Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Affairs attests to ESC’s commitment to ensuring success for its students.

#### **Standard 9—**

The Team found that ESC is most deserving of the high student satisfaction ratings it has received. These ratings seem to be largely the result of a model in which programs of study are mentor-directed and individualized. The participative process that characterizes decision making regarding student services is also worthy of praise. In short, ESC’s care and concern for student success in learning is obvious. Empire State College has a great deal to offer its students as well as higher education in general. It serves as a model institution committed to student learning contracts, faculty mentoring and a well defined mission that has been lived and well received by its students.

Having said that, however, the Team has recognized some challenges facing ESC. Staff mentioned difficulty in measuring outcomes related to retention goals. Having the technology to track enrollment and retention data will be very important. There is also a concern that as the College continues to grow its enrollment, staffing levels to support student services may not be able to keep pace. This will also be an important issue for the next Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Affairs.

#### **Standard 9 Suggestions**

- 1. The Team suggests that the Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Affairs be positioned in the organization such that he or she will have a strong voice representing all students, student services,**

and enrollment needs. This will be an asset to the operation of the campus, the organization of student services, and the planning process. This critical senior leadership position will be the reminder that students and their learning needs come first as the mission statement clearly states.

2. The need for advancements in technology that make important enrollment information available to the centers' and units' student services staff is being planned and will likely be implemented in the next three to five years. The Team suggests that the student information system be capable of providing mentors, student support staff, and other offices serving students access to student enrollment information. The system should also provide much needed direction for admissions personnel regarding the selection of students who can succeed at ESC. This vital communications link will enable all offices to better meet student needs regardless of the location.

## **Faculty**

This section covers the following standard:

- Standard 10: Faculty

**The institution meets this standard.**

### **Standard 10—**

The Team found ESC to have an academically well prepared faculty that plays an important role in institutional governance and that is strongly committed to students. Despite the strengths of the faculty, however, there is a potential problem area involving faculty workload. This is a consequence of the valuing of faculty participation in governance, which is to be commended, but which is also very time consuming. Likewise, the unique relationship between faculty and students in the ESC model, as well as the necessary commitment to scholarly activity create tensions in terms of balance and load for faculty. Moreover, it seems that these tensions can only increase as ESC enrollment grows. Since the current state of the economy would indicate that simply hiring more faculty is not something that will be possible, achieving balance among the competing forces for faculty time and effort will be essential.

## Academic Programs

This section covers the following standards:

- Standard 11: Educational Offerings
- Standard 12: General Education
- Standard 13: Related Educational Activities

**The institution meets these standards.**

### **Standard 11—**

The Team found that ESC has a great number of academic offerings, as well as flexible and creative approaches to reaching and serving students. The offerings, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, align logically with its mission, offering sufficient breadth, depth, and versatility to meet the needs of its mature adult learners. Newer programs, such as the MAT and bachelor of nursing degree also serve urgent identified needs in the state and nation. The team was also able to verify that online students are supported with readily available resources. ESC's academic partnerships and articulation agreements have been entered into with appropriate care such that program integrity and organizational resources are preserved. A review of graduate program materials, including the Catalog, confirmed attention to development of research and independent thinking skills at appropriate levels, and discussions with faculty, staff, and students in graduate programs confirmed strong and enthusiastic engagement and commitment to quality in all enterprise activities.

However, there are also some potential challenges. Most notable of these is the continuing need to secure the resources required to ensure consistently high quality and responsiveness and timeliness across levels, programs, faculty mentors, and locations. The ESC model also requires self-directed adult learners who have the knowledge and self-awareness to decide in advance what they need. The team heard some disagreement between those who see commitment to the individualized curriculum as a core value and those concerned about its long-term viability, given fiscal pressures and resource constraints. A possible problem related to the individualized approach is that students customarily do not complete and submit their degree plans at the beginning of their program, which suggests that the plan may not reach its full potential as a guide to a carefully selected and logically sequenced set of courses. When that happens, students are at risk of taking courses that cannot be used to meet degree requirements, substantive duplication, and missed opportunities to build upon and leverage previous learning. While not without resource implications, ESC may wish to consider requiring that degree plan be submitted earlier in the process than they are now. Two things the team did hear support for were the need to revise and sim-

plify the degree plan guide and to make as many of its components available online as possible. Providing for electronic filing and approval could also expedite the process and make it easier to incorporate these into the program review and outcomes assessment processes. Another challenge associated with the highly individualized curricular pathways learners take to complete degrees has to do with meeting industry standards for establishment and assessment of goals, measurable objectives, and learning outcomes across programs and courses. (ESC's BSN and MAT curricula have already done this.) Working with mentors, students in other degree programs do articulate learning goals and a rationale for their programs of study, but there is still a need for some adaptation given ESC's unique mission and expectations for its learners. While ESC is making observable progress in identifying and measuring performance against a set of core competencies, there remains work to be done in this area.

Given that operating multiple locations is central to ESC's mission to provide access to working adults, a strong technology infrastructure, including a robust student information system, shared access to the resources of the online learning platform, Web-based meeting software such as Eluminate, and various voice solutions is desirable. The team confirmed leadership intent to invest in advanced technologies for this purpose. It should also be noted that, with minor exceptions, members of the ESC community have ready access to an array of Virtual Library reference and other support resources through a "one stop" Web portal. However, although students have access to ebooks and journal literature through the online library, reference assistance is unavailable on Saturdays. Since students are almost all combining their studies with work, the reason for the Saturday closure is unclear and might be reconsidered, especially if enrollments continue to grow.

### **Standard 11 Suggestions**

- 1. Revise and simplify the degree plan guide and make as many of the components of the approval process as possible available online.**
- 2. Move forward with initiatives to identify course- and program-level learning goals, objectives, and outcomes and to incorporate these systematically into course materials in a way that fits within ESC's individualized model.**
- 3. Invest in a strong technology infrastructure, including a robust student information system, shared access to the resources of the online learning platform, Web-based meeting software such as Eluminate, and various voice solutions to improve sharing of information across locations.**
- 4. Related to item #3, invest in the training needed to ensure effective use**

of technologies to improve to the quality of services to internal and external customers.

5. **Complete the review of graduate course descriptions to ensure they accurately reflect high quality and clear communication of graduate-level expectations.**

#### **Standard 12—**

The Team found That ESC is well positioned to ensure student proficiency regarding general education requirements. The requirements align with Middle States expectations, and students are able to fulfill these requirements through various options outlined in their approved degree plans. The team also confirmed that ESC has fully embraced the underlying rationale for general education requirements and is attending to this requirement appropriately. Direct assessment of proficiency in the general education areas occurs through ESC's General Education Review (GEAR) process. The team heard strong support for this initiative and encourages ESC to continue with full implementation, including possible mandatory, rather than recommended, skill development. Faculty, staff, and students expressed concerns about math skills deficits and it is therefore suggested that either pre-admission or early assessment be added in this area, as well.

#### **Standard 12 Suggestion**

**Move forward with writing and math skills assessment, support, and development. Systematically use the data from the GEAR assessments to evaluate the curriculum; consider optimal course sequencing; analyze implications for retention; incorporate attention to core learning outcomes throughout programs of study; inform the content and focus of new student orientations, study group meetings, and residencies; and allocate funds for additional student support initiatives and resources.**

#### **Standard 13—**

The Team considered ESC's work in the areas of Basic Skills, Experiential Learning, Additional Locations, and Distance/Distributed Learning. It was noted that skill and knowledge deficiencies are common among entering students. Unless these deficiencies are addressed, they can cause attrition that might be prevented with timely and effective interventions. Determining how and when to evaluate and intervene is a challenge. ESC is working on this and is encouraged to continue its good efforts. The Team also found that ESC has a well established and sound set of policies and procedures for evaluating experiential learning. One suggestion arising from the visit, and one for which there was internal recogni-



tion and support, is to revise the instructions and policies related to the preparation of materials to be assessed for credit award for experiential learning. Another is to make as much of the process available online as possible, thereby helping expedite decisions about the assignment of credits.

Regarding ESC's regional centers and statewide locations, the Team found that although relationships between and among these parts of the enterprise and the central administrative offices can be complex, such relationships are well understood by the faculty, staff, and administrators with whom the Team met. Moreover, the Team found no evidence of serious inconsistencies in quality of programs and services across the various parts of the enterprise. In another finding, the Team determined that the faculty, staff, and students associated with the Center for Distance Learning (CDL), which is responsible for supporting undergraduate online instruction, are knowledgeable, enthusiastic, and dedicated to applying all the best practices for technology-enabled teaching and learning. The CDL's compliance with ADA standards is assured with the assistance of a special office for that purpose. On the other hand, ESC may wish to consider whether it continues to make sense for the CDL to remain as a separate entity.

## **Assessment**

This section covers the following standards:

- Standard 7: Institutional Assessment
- Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning

### **The institution meets these standards**

#### **Standard 7—**

The Team found that ESC competently responds to its basic institutional research needs. ESC has built and expanded its institutional assessment capacity such that it now has the ability to evaluate overall effectiveness in the context of mission and goals. ESC also does a good job of connecting institutional assessment with the assessment of student learning. In support of its assessment efforts, the college is developing a more strategically and analytically oriented series of key performance indicators, which will allow for a connection of performance to strategic goals on multiple dimensions. When fully developed, this model will provide a framework for the integration of planning, assessment, and management practices at ESC. The Team commends ESC for continuing to enhance its institu-

tional assessment capacity, particularly through the development of performance indicators built around strategic areas. On the other hand, ESC, does not seem to have a business analytic or enterprise information system in keeping with its size, scope, sophistication, and ambition. There are also questions about the design and implementation of the business intelligence and data warehouse tools, and addressing these questions will require sustained and coordinated attention among key stakeholders. In the long run, this investment will support better informed decision making at the College.

#### **Standard 7 Suggestion**

**The team suggests that ESC continue to purposefully and deliberately support the development of a streamlined data warehouse and more user-friendly, powerful business intelligence tools.**

#### **Standard 14—**

The Team found that the ESC community has engaged in a thoughtful, critical analysis of assessment of student learning outcomes and has made an astute identification of challenges and possible solutions. It is clear that the significant efforts undertaken during the last 5+ years have significantly advanced assessment of student learning outcomes efforts. However ESC's traditional focus on individual student learning can make it difficult to make clearly articulated statements of expected student learning outcomes. Nevertheless, the identification and development of learning outcomes statements must be emphasized at the studies, program, and institutional levels. And once such statements are formulated, it would be useful to revise the ESC Web site such that students can easily find and read the outcomes statements. It may also be useful to undertake discussions with mentors, associate deans, deans, administrators, and other stakeholders to define target values for student performance. Likewise, and as recognized in the Self-Study Report, a comprehensive review of learning contracts and contract evaluations should also be supported by all constituents in the ESC community. In making these observations, the Team does not mean to imply that the student work assignments become standardized instruments that must be used. Rather, it is suggested that even as student work assignments remain individualized, they be developed in a manner that maximizes their utility for assessment purposes, both formative and summative.

As also recognized in the Self-Study Report, the Team respectfully suggests that it is time to improve the ability to see and use existing data and information on student learning outcomes by implementing the use of electronic portfolios.

Moreover, sharing information on “best practices” in designing and making learning outcomes assessment and involving faculty in this effort is very important. Making “best practices” information readily available through such channels as associate deans, area conveners, the Center for Mentoring and Learning, and CUSP-PA, increases the probability that information is shared with mentors. However, the Team also recognizes that the number of centers and units distributed throughout the state, and the tremendous workload involved with individualized instruction efforts, must be taken into account when developing innovative opportunities for sharing of assessment information and considering how that information can improve teaching and learning. Therefore, it may be useful to identify individuals, “ambassadors of assessment,” who would be provided with sufficient workload release to work with OAIR, CUSP-PA, and CML. Likewise, it may be wise to continue to invest in improved technology that can reduce challenges imposed by distance and travel time to increase collaboration and discussion across centers and units

#### **Standard 14 Suggestions**

- 1. Identify and develop clearly articulated statements of expected student learning outcomes at the studies, program, and institutional levels. We further suggest that revising the ESC Web site to allow students to quickly locate statements of expected student learning outcomes may prove useful.**
- 2. Support a comprehensive review of learning contracts and contract evaluations such that consistent and clear statements regarding student learning outcomes in all areas of study, especially those that are less formally structured, can be developed.**
- 3. Improve the ability to see and use existing data and information about student learning outcomes by implementing the use of electronic portfolios (perhaps through ANGEL platform) that can provide an archive of student work useful for when students seek admission to graduate school or when they seek employment, as well as outcomes data useful for both GEAR and assessment-in-the-major efforts.**
- 4. Promote efforts to use assessment information to identify “best practices” that advance student learning. Making information readily available through multiple channels such as associate deans, area conveners, the Center for Mentoring and Learning, and CUSP-PA, would also promote**

involvement in outcomes assessment activities by illustrating the formative value of assessment efforts that should, after all, be the primary focus of assessment activities.

5. Account for barriers to sharing and using assessment information arising from the unique aspects of ESC, recognizing the tremendous workload involved with individualized instruction efforts. Consider increasing investments in improved technology to mitigate problems imposed by these barriers and others imposed by the need for collaboration and discussion across centers and units located away from Saratoga Springs.

### **Summary of Recommendations for Continuing Compliance**

The Team has only one recommendation to make. The recommendation relates to **Standard 3: Institutional Resources**. The language of the standard reads as follows:

The human, financial, technical, physical facilities, and other resources necessary to achieve an institution's mission and goals are available and accessible. In the context of the institution's mission, the effective and efficient uses of the institution's resources are analyzed as part of ongoing outcomes assessment.

The Team's Recommendation is as follows:

#### **Recommendation**

**The Team recommends that SUNY continue to explore a more equitable way to allocate resources to Empire State College that acknowledges its unique mission.**