

Report to the  
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students

of

**Carroll Community College**  
**Westminster, MD 21157**

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 April 10 – 13, 2011

**The Members of the Team:**

Chair during the Visit and responsible for Team Report

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**This report represents the views of the Evaluation Team as interpreted by the Chair; 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 Carroll Community College. This 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/CEO:

**Dr. Faye Pappalardo**

Chief Academic Officer:

**Dr. James D. Ball**

**Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs, Dean of the Faculty**

Chair of the Board of Trustees:

**Ms. Barbara Charnock**

**Chairwoman**

**Carroll Community College**

**1601 Washington Road**

**Westminster, MD 21157**

## **Standard 1: Mission, Goals, and Objectives**

*The institution's mission clearly defines its purpose within the context of higher education and indicates whom the institution serves and what it intends to accomplish. The institution's stated goals, consistent with the aspirations and expectations of higher education clearly specify how the institution will fulfill its mission. The mission and goals are developed and recognized by the institution with the participation of its members and its governing body and are utilized to develop and shape its programs and practices and to evaluate its effectiveness.*

The institution meets this standard.

### **Summary of evidence and findings**

Taken together, the College's Mission, Vision, Values and Purposes statements delineate the College's character, its basic purposes and characteristics. The themes stressed in these documents – learning, a sense of community, and a supportive environment for learning and those who support learning -- were echoed in conversations with faculty, staff, and students and are reflected both in the college's organizational processes and in the well-designed and inviting campus facilities. In combination, these guiding statements identify the range of its educational offerings and state its commitment to effective teaching, to assessment and continuous improvement, to excellence in use of technology, to effective use of resources, to proactive response to change and diversity, to partnership with business, industry, and government and to its service to the larger community. Evidence that the College acts on each of these commitments was verified during the campus visit, through interviews, document review, and observation.

The Values statement, which is reflective of the President's tone, speaks to the institution's *integrity* ("ethical and truthful representation of the college to students and the community"), to the *character of interpersonal and interactions* ("rewards just, humane, honest, and respectful human interaction"), and to the *processes* the College follows in carrying out its mission ("positive and collaborative problem-solving and solutions-oriented action"). Meetings with the Board of Trustees, with the College Senate, the Academic Council, the Executive Team, with students and deans, all confirmed that this tone is pervasive in campus conduct and interactions.

The current mission statement was initially approved in 1996, and has been confirmed, with very little revision, every four years, in accord with Maryland law. The College deliberately delayed mission and goals *revision* in 2010 until conclusion of the self-study process. The Self-Study confirms the need for a comprehensive review of its mission and goals and, as of April 2011, the President has established a review committee and established a timetable for accomplishing the mission and long range institutional goals review. The recommendations are scheduled to come to the Planning Advisory Council by November 2011. Once the Mission and Long Term Institutional Goals are revised, the College will prepare the Compass goals for the next five years, based on the revised mission and long range goals.

The *Long Range Institutional Goals*, approved by the Board in 2005, are closely allied to the Mission and to the Vision statements, both emphasizing the centrality of student learning. The 12 long range goals address the whole operation of the college and its constituents, from core competencies; career and baccalaureate preparation programs; support for student learning, community and employee development; community partnerships and enrichment; to cultural awareness; and effective use of resources. These are stated in general outcomes language. The six *Strategic Priorities* were approved in 2005 as part of a five-year plan (2006-2010), called *Compass: Charting the Course to 2010*.

Each May the President announces annual *Strategic Initiatives* for the following year, which are directly linked to the Strategic Priorities; detailed area plans (such as the Academic Plan for FY 2011 and FY 2012) are organized around the Strategic Priorities and reference both the Long Range Institutional Goals and the Strategic Initiatives. These plans include expected outcomes, indicators and benchmarks, times for completion and responsible parties.

The Mission/Vision/Purposes statements and the related long range goals have provided a good base for ongoing institutional development and evaluation, but will profit from the planned thorough review. The strategic priorities coupled with the annual strategic initiatives provide a clear basis for resource allocation, which includes development of planned curricula and analysis of outcomes. The annual goals are developed through a well-defined and reasonably inclusive process, incorporating a review of performance on its institutional effectiveness indicators and of the annual strategic plan achievement reports from all the college's areas and units. The Mission and Goals are well advertised in campus publications and on the college website. It is expected the formal and comprehensive review in 2011-12 will be well communicated throughout the campus.

### **Commendation**

The College is to be commended for recognizing the need and moving forward with a comprehensive review of its mission and goals to provide a base for its next five-year strategic plan.

### **Suggestion**

The College should move forward with its planned mission and goals review in time to establish the next five-year strategic planning beginning in FY2013.

### **Recommendations**

None

## **Standard 2: Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal**

*An institution conducts ongoing planning and resource allocation based on its mission and goals, develops objectives to achieve them, and utilizes the results of its assessment activities for institutional renewal. Implementation and subsequent evaluation of the success of the strategic plan and resource allocation support the development and change necessary to improve and to maintain institutional quality.*

The institution meets this standard.

### **Summary of evidence and findings**

Carroll Community College has developed a comprehensive, layered and systematic process for planning, resource allocation, and institutional renewal. The College has established twelve Long Range Institutional Goals which are drawn from the Mission, Vision, Values, and Purposes statements. Six Strategic Priorities were set in 2005, showing what aspects of the Long Range Goals were to receive emphasis over a five (now seven) year period, to 2012. Each year the President announces a set of Strategic Initiatives, directly flowing from the Strategic Priorities, and all College areas and units set their annual plans in this context. The institutional long range goals, strategic priorities, and annual strategic initiatives are clearly stated and linked to one another. The annual individual area and unit plans are, for the most part, clearly stated in measurable terms, and directly linked to the college's goals, priorities, and initiatives.

The chief planning body is the Planning Advisory Council (PAC), which is broadly representative of the college community. The PAC meets regularly, and reviews a rich array of assessment data and reports prepared by the Institutional Research Office. In February the PAC reviews the annual Institutional Effectiveness Assessment Report, which shows the College's achievement on 50 indicators, or measures, with benchmarks. The measures themselves are reviewed after a five-year period. The Board of Trustees is also engaged in the planning and assessment process, identifying in 2005 a set of core measures of institutional effectiveness, on which it receives an annual report in December. The Board approved benchmarks for the assessment measures that are also indicators for the Maryland-mandated Performance Accountability Report.

The budget and resource allocation process, which begins in September, has been tied to the strategic initiatives, and since FY 2011 all requests for new expenditures must be justified in terms of the strategic priorities and impact on long range institutional goals. The budget process involves the same groups involved with planning – the President and Executive team and the Planning Advisory Council. After the PAC has voted whether or not to endorse the budget proposal, the proposal is presented to the College Senate and the Student Government for comment, and then to the Board of Trustees for approval, in December, and then it is submitted to the County. Interviews with all these bodies confirmed these practices are in operation.

The planning process reflects conclusions drawn from assessment results. For example, when the PAC identified three areas of subpar performance, strategic initiatives were identified to

address each area of concern. The annual Institutional Effectiveness Assessment Report (2010) documents results on 50 benchmarked indicators, grouped around 10 of the 12 long range institutional goals. Many of these are also core indicators for the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC). These reports are clearly marked to show whether goals were met or not, and which indicators warrant further examination and action. The planning process is further supported by the College's environmental scanning reports, which appear to be extremely useful in identifying potential programs for Continuing Education and Training.

The process of decision making is well documented and clearly explained, in various planning documents (Compass 2005-10, for example; Board of Trustees minutes, and in the Planning Advisory Council Orientation Manual). Responsibility for initiatives is identified in area reports. The report, *Trend Worksheets and Supplemental Data*; Planning Advisory Council Meeting, February 8, 2010, shows serious consideration of findings and demonstrates assignment of responsibility.

The College has made a concerted effort to communicate the process to the larger community. Information about this process and the official documents are widely distributed and formally presented at advertised annual events. In June 2003 the First Annual Report of the PAC was distributed to all full-time employees, a practice that continues with reports also posted on the College I web (p. 22 Self-Study). In their annual self-evaluation forms, faculty members explicitly link their individual goals to the department goals and the College's Academic Plan. The planning process appears to be widely understood by college administrators, and the team confirmed that at least one administrative director requires staff members to attend at least one PAC meeting each year.

The planning process is periodically assessed, with the timeline of PAC formation, review of goals and priorities, and changing benchmarks. In 2002, through a survey, the PAC evaluated the effectiveness of the planning processes and PAC operations, and that survey has been administered each year since. While this constitutes a self-evaluation, the survey reports show thoughtful comments and suggestions. It is suggested that a wider group be surveyed during the planned comprehensive review of mission and goals in 2011-12. The April 5, 2011 report on actions taken in response to the Self-Study's 41 recommendations asserts that new questions will be added to the College survey to assess how well faculty and staff understand the mission, goals, and planning process.

### **Commendations**

The Planning Advisory Council Orientation Manual provides an excellent blueprint for the College's planning process.

### **Recommendations**

None

### **Standard 3: Institutional Resources**

*The human, financial, technical, 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 College meets this standard.

#### **Summary of Evidence and Findings**

As with most community colleges, Carroll Community College faces short-term financial challenges related to limited public funding support, together with increased demand for services from the public. Students are paying a higher percentage of educational expenses; however, tuition and fee costs do not appear to be out of line with other regional institutions. Despite public funding uncertainties, there are many positives for this institution. The College has a young physical plant, so it does not appear to face significant maintenance issues. A new Facilities Master Plan was recently approved. Technology resources appear to be strong, plus the college has a comprehensive multi-year technology plan. The College also has been able to increase staffing over the past several years to support enrollment increases.

- Financial Condition

The College's overall financial condition appears to be stable during this period of fiscal uncertainty. The College's balanced budget includes funding increases for priorities consistent with the institutional goals. Of note is the fact that the College's overall budget increased by 52% from FY05 to FY10. This increase was supported not only from tuition and fee revenue increases (due to rate increases and a 17% enrollment increase during that period), but additional state and local revenues. During this period the College significantly increased staffing, including faculty lines.

As with many public colleges, Carroll Community College's FY10 balance sheet indicates a significant deficit in net assets (\$1.7 million) due to recognition of significant future liabilities for Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB). Despite this long-term structural deficit, the College is able to meet its annual OPEB commitments. Of help to meeting these and other commitments is the recent adjustment of the College's fund balance cap (from 5% to 10%) by the Carroll County Commissioners. This additional fiscal flexibility is important to community colleges, especially due to the uncertainty of government support and future enrollment trends.

- Facilities

The College has undertaken a significant capital expansion over the past eight years with the addition of four academic/multi-purpose facilities. The new Facilities Master Plan identifies expanding parking areas (through a parking garage) as the major capital project in the next five

year horizon. The Facilities Master Plan also notes that the campus is “built-out” without the elimination of athletic fields or the acquisition of additional land contiguous to the College.

- Technology

Carroll Community College appears to have a robust technology infrastructure with significant technology both in the classrooms and in student resource areas. According to the self-study, all classrooms contain electronic technology. The total number of workstations available is impressive. The College’s five-year technology plan appears comprehensive and details an action plan, including projected resources needs, to systemically enhance the technology capabilities of the College.

**Significant accomplishments, significant progress or exemplary/innovative practices**

For a relatively young college, Carroll Community College appears to have a robust fundraising operation and recently completed its first capital campaign. The Foundation is a significant provider of scholarship support, ranging from \$150,000 to \$250,000 to meet the financing needs of Carroll Community College students.

**Commendations**

- The College appears to have strong commitment to enhancing student educational and support activities through technology as evidenced by its technology planning efforts, its investment in technology and by the external recognition of its technological services and capabilities.
- In these uncertain fiscal times, it is important for an institution to ensure that it has the resources available to support unplanned financial needs. Therefore we commend the College and the County Commissioners for recognizing the need for the College to maintain an operating fund balance in an amount not to exceed 10% of the operating budget.

**Recommendations**

None

## **Standard 4: Leadership and Governance**

*The institution's system of governance clearly defines the roles of institutional constituencies in policy development and decision-making. The governance structure includes an active governing body with sufficient autonomy to assure institutional integrity and to fulfill its responsibilities of policy and resource development, consistent with the mission of the institution.*

The College meets this standard.

### **Summary of evidence and findings**

The overarching goal of this standard is to ensure there is in place a clear governance structure with sufficient independence and expertise to assure academic and institutional integrity. The various parts of the system need to have clearly delineated authority and responsibilities with a demonstrated climate of mutual support and respect.

At Carroll there is a clearly defined structure of leadership and governance. The policy making role of the Board of Trustees is clearly defined in Maryland statute and appears to be fully understood and complied with by the members of this College's Board. Trustees' involvement in advocacy at state and local levels is noted as well as the seriousness of its self assessment practices. The Board's organizational structure is clear and practical with obvious efforts at transparency. The obvious positive relationship among members of the Board and the President benefits the entire College and is testimony to the commitment of all parties to focus on what is best for the institution.

In general, the structures of the College Senate and the Academic Council are well thought out and appropriate for the institution. It would appear that the governance structure allows for a great deal of input and participation by a broad cross-section of the College community including students through their own formal organization. As is the case in many institutions, on-going attention needs to be given to communicating to professional staff and students how the process works, what recommendations are being considered, and then the actual decisions made including implementation. This type of continuous feedback loop reassures campus constituents that the system is working and actions are being taken on issues that come before the various governance units. Planned improvements to the internal iweb and the posting of more information there and on the College's web page are positive steps. However, posting information does not ensure constituents will read it. Multiple references in other publications and discussion forums will ensure that governance system recommendations and the decisions that resulted from them are viewed as part of what makes the College a dynamic institution.

### **Recommendations**

None

## **Standard 5: Administration**

*The institution's administrative structure and services facilitate learning and research/scholarship, foster quality improvement, and support the institution's organization and governance.*

The College meets this standard.

### **Summary of evidence and findings**

The overall purpose of this standard is to demonstrate that the administrative structure is effective and efficient in facilitating institutional progress in meeting the organizational mission and goals. Determining effectiveness of organizational / administrative structure must be tied to measurements of progress on overall institutional goals that flow from how well operational and strategic priorities are being addressed. In addition there must be evidence that institutional integrity and financial viability are being maintained.

Carroll's administrative structure appears appropriate for the institution and for implementation of the College's strategic plan in support of its overall mission and goals. The College evidences a strong executive appropriately credentialed in their area of discipline with significant combined administrative experience. The recent change in the Academic and Student Affairs areas show that the College is able to make adjustments in assignments based on new institutional realities and needs. The College has not only filled vacancies, but found experienced professionals to do so who will bring fresh perspectives and creative new ideas to the College. The new structure is also designed to ensure that administrators' scope of authority allows them to be close enough to faculty, staff and students that operational matters and concerns can be addressed in timely and practical ways. This allows Carroll's experienced President and her well qualified executive team to focus on coordinating efforts to address institution-wide issues and priorities.

### **Significant accomplishments, significant progress or exemplary/innovative practices**

Assessing administrative effectiveness involves formal evaluation of individual professional performance as well as an overall assessment of how well the administrative leadership team functions in helping the College meet its institutional goals. While campus perceptions of administrative performance are important to ensure trust and mutual respect, it is progress on institutional goals that is most telling. Pairing of the results of the section of the biannual *Employee Satisfaction Survey* that addresses perceptions of executive leadership with quantitative measurements to assess ten of the twelve institutional goals is a solid combination of indirect and direct evidence of administrative effectiveness. It is positively noted that the culture of evidence strived for at Carroll that incorporates an *assessment – planning – action – assessment* loop is also applied to evaluating administrative performance and effectiveness.

### **Recommendations**

None

## **Standard 6: Integrity**

*In the conduct of its programs and activities involving the public and the constituencies it serves, the institution demonstrates adherence to ethical standards and its own stated policies, providing support for academic and intellectual freedom.*

The College meets this standard.

### **Summary of evidence and findings**

This standard focuses primarily on the presence of various policies and procedures and the successful implementation of these guidelines in a thorough and impartial manner. Carroll Community College has submitted a number of documents/exhibits in support of this standard.

It appears that Carroll has the requisite policies and procedures manuals to help guide the College in achieving its mission, visions, goals and objectives in an impartial and systemic fashion. Board policies, Human Resources policies and procedures, student policies and procedures are evident in both written and electronic format. The College prominently displays its mission, vision, values statement, and goals in almost all its written and/or electronic documentation. The College catalog contains extensive information about the programs and services of the College, including standard disclosure information, such as EEO and accreditation language. Basic college policies are well explained in the catalog and supplementary information also is available in a student handbook.

The College's website is the primary means of communicating with students, although the catalog, course brochures and other physical documents also are available for students. The website appears to be organized and it is fairly easy to navigate to certain subject areas. Information appears to be periodically updated and appears to be consistent throughout.

The College clearly recognizes that a key element in providing an optimum educational environment for students is to embrace a focus on diversity of ideology as well of cultural and social backgrounds to promote a community of learners. To this end, the College has developed a Diversity/World View Strategic Improvement Plan to help guide the community on promoting diversity at Carroll Community College.

### **Significant accomplishments, significant progress or exemplary/innovative practices**

For a relatively small and young institution, Carroll Community College seems to embrace the use of technology to disseminate information and to give the sense of transparency to the operations of the College. The site includes some supplemental information not generally found on websites, including trustee biographies, Board of Trustee by-laws, a Library Collection Policy, Facility Use Statistics by Classroom and an indexed policy manual. The website also includes important College planning documents, including the Facilities Master Plan and the

College's Technology Plan, as well as general institutional research studies to enable the community to obtain a better understanding about Carroll Community College.

### **Commendation**

The College is to be commended for the nurturing and maintenance of a positive campus climate.

### **Suggestion**

- The College is encouraged to continue with the implementation of activities and actions contained in its Diversity/World View Strategic Improvement Plan.

### **Recommendations**

None

## **Standard 7: Institutional Assessment**

*The institution has developed and implemented an assessment process that evaluates its overall effectiveness in achieving its mission and goals and its compliance with accreditation standards.*

The College meets this standard.

### **Summary of Evidence and Findings:**

Carroll Community College is adequately engaged in well documented, organized and sustained assessment processes to evaluate and improve the total range of programs and services as stated in the *Characteristics of Excellence* handbook.

From the Self-Study Report and materials provided, the evaluation team found that Institutional Assessment at Carroll Community College involves all constituents from students to faculty, from staff to administration and includes Board of Trustees. Specifically the evaluation team observed the following:

- The Institutional Assessment process tightly integrates college mission and its priorities to many aspects of everyday functions and operations of the college.
- Most areas of the college prepare assessment reports documenting performance measures attained and their extent compared to established benchmarks.
- Institutional Effectiveness Assessment Report identifies existing deficiencies in performance measures, if any, and the College prepares a plan to overcome such performance issues.
- Strategic Priorities and other relevant reports are prominently published.
- Due to a recent revelation that the institutional assessment process was perceived as too complex by some employees, the VP of Planning made presentations on Institutional

Assessment to all college employees to explain the process and how the different activities tie together towards to improve institutional effectiveness.

- Based on continuous analyses of data departments make informed decisions to improve institutional effectiveness.

**Commendation:**

- Throughout the Self-Study Report, the review team found that effective feedback from assessment processes triggers new plans of action to address any subpar performance measures when identified.

**Suggestion:**

The College should consider a more focused approach to the selection of benchmarks so that the assessment process is most effective for the campus community.

**Recommendations:**

None

**Standard 8: Admissions and Retention**

*The institution seeks to admit students whose interests, goals, and abilities are congruent with its mission and seeks to retain them through the pursuit of the students' educational goals.*

The College meets this standard.

**Summary of evidence and findings:**

The College has put forth significant effort assessing the areas addressed in this standard and has demonstrated commitment to continual improvement based on data, including student feedback. Taken as a whole, these efforts support student retention across the College. Some observations from this visit include:

- Available online and in the college catalog and other publications, the procedures for admissions, placement testing, and registration are clearly worded and suitable for the population appropriate for Carroll Community College. Marketing and recruiting activities are reactive to the changing demographics of the area. Carroll Community College's current work towards increased automation in communication, applications, and registration will further clarify the admissions and registration process for credit courses for new students. The staff of the appropriate offices should be encouraged to continue to move towards increased efficiency in these areas.
- For the purposes of college decision-making and academic planning, learning outcomes and required curricula for each academic program are available online and accessible to both prospective and current students. The Admissions staff participates in an increasing

number of recruiting events throughout their geographic region and assists with college awareness outreach activities through the county.

- Though Admissions has recently been separated from its former place in the Advising and Counseling Office, cooperation has continued between these two offices. Advising staff help respond to prospective student inquiries when the Admissions staff is unavailable and Admissions staff assists with advisement activities. Specifically, Admissions advises the Hills Scholars, concurrent enrollment students, international students, and incoming transfer students. This distribution of work allows students to get consistent information from multiple sources and balances the workload more evenly across offices that may be short staffed or when they are experiencing a high volume of student visits.
- There is adequate academic support for students who place into developmental coursework. The tutoring services available for transitional courses, along with specially trained tutors for English Language Learners, supplement the academic curricula for developmental students outlined in Standard 13.
- Carroll Community College has now transitioned to the Virtual First Advising sessions for all students. By requiring all students to “attend” this session on their own and take a quiz at its conclusion, the College emphasizes student responsibility and decision-making at the outset. While this is a recent development, there is hope this process will provide more information to students upfront and involve them in academic planning even before meeting with an advisor.
- Financial aid advising is available for current and prospective students and their families, and accurate information regarding financial aid is available online. The Self-Study indicates an interest on increasing student utilization of financial aid advising based on comparison to Maryland survey benchmarks. However, Financial Aid staff seems unsure about the intended format of this advisement and are encouraged to better define their expectations before moving forward on this recommendation. In addition, if Carroll Community College determines that Direct Lending is a viable funding option for its students, the College should ensure that appropriate resources can be made available to support effective processing of student loans.
- A recommendation of the Self-Study was to improve communication regarding the awarding of transfer credit and the adjustment of appropriate procedures. Recent changes have been made to the process of evaluating transfer credits and the new process should improve the information available to students regarding their transfer credits and improve the efficiency of the transfer evaluation process.

**Recommendation:**

- In order to continue to be in compliance with federal Title IV requirements, Carroll Community College should continue its efforts to improve its financial aid processes through automation and enhance coordination efforts with other offices.

**Standard 9: Student Support Services**

*The institution provides student support services reasonably necessary to enable each student to achieve the institution's goals for students.*

The institution meets this standard.

**Summary of evidence and findings:**

By involving itself in a continual process of evaluation and assessment for student support services, Carroll Community College provides reasonable support services for students and is actively pursuing additional opportunities to improve student support services as demonstrated by the following:

- The student support services at Carroll operate under a system of defined learning outcomes which are regularly adjusted based on data and student feedback.
- Carroll Community College and its staff demonstrate a commitment to protecting student information. Their policies and procedures for the protection and release of protected information are well documented, available for review by students, faculty, and staff, and issues regarding confidentiality are a consistent part of training and professional development.
- Staff in student support services hold positions for which they are qualified by education or experience and each actively participates in on-going professional development. Although some student support offices may be short staffed, a robust system of cross-training and inter-office cooperation allows for consistent access to support services. The shared responsibility for academic advising in particular serves as an example of staff sharing responsibilities for the benefit of students.
- Academic advisement information is available to students through a variety of formats, and the staff who provide advising are also involved in other student support activities.
- The College has an organized process for receiving and reviewing student complaints. However, the documentation of student complaints are not kept in a central location, so there is no reliable data on the number of formal student complaints received or their resolutions. There is no formal training for administrators who respond to student complaints, though it is believed that each operates on fairly consistent standards in accordance with the College's Code of Integrity.

- The implementation of Retention Alert has allowed for increased levels of intrusive outreach to students with academic or behavioral risk factors. Outreach efforts, handled by an interdisciplinary group of faculty and staff, help to ensure that students get the support services they need in a timely fashion. Referral processes for students requiring mental health counseling are straightforward and have resulted in positive outcomes and feedback.

**Recommendation:**

None

**Standard 10: Faculty**

*The institution's instructional, research, and service programs are devised, developed, monitored, and supported by qualified professionals.*

The College meets this standard.

**General Comments and Observations**

The college addresses its mission to promote effective teaching and its vision to be a learning-centered college by displaying a commitment to teaching and learning that begins with a required teaching demonstration when hiring new faculty, and continues by providing support for professional development, encouraging faculty research projects and conducting classroom observations by supervisors and peers. All faculty members, including part-time credit and continuing education faculty, are evaluated by students.

Faculty includes academic department chairpersons, program or discipline coordinators, and librarians. The college attempts to keep the credit hour ratio of full-time faculty to part-time faculty to the Maryland requirement of 50 percent. Ten percent of the faculty members hold doctorate degrees; all other faculty members hold a master's degree or the degree/professional experience equivalency in their discipline.

Promotion procedures are clearly defined and communicated. Expectations of faculty, promotion criteria, grievance procedures and academic freedom statements are published in the *Employee Handbook*. The faculty promotion process has changed in that the emphasis moved to more long-term, measurable learning improvement activities which integrate annual evaluations with promotions. The policy change itself was faculty-driven indicating a faculty commitment to excellence in teaching, scholarship and leadership. Examples of promotion projects are provided.

The College's Faculty Development Plan includes a separate section for new faculty. This gives evidence that the college has a commitment to providing quality teaching on an ongoing basis. Adjunct faculty have an annual orientation, there is a guide for adjunct faculty, and

adjuncts work in conjunction with faculty in their respective departments/disciplines. Adjuncts also have office space and places to meet with students.

Faculty members use assessment of learning outcomes to revise curriculum. Academic Council members, individual faculty and administrators confirmed that faculty members drive the curriculum. One example offered was a course change whose originator was an adjunct faculty member.

Faculty members serve as leaders in the College in many ways. They serve on the Senate and Program Review committees, and lead the Academic Council and the General Education committees. Formal training is provided for new Academic Council members. Faculty input is sought by the administration at many levels. Faculty identify themselves as being valued members of the college community. Finally, as noted in the Credit Student Satisfaction Survey findings in 2009, the highest rating was earned by “attitude of faculty toward students in class,” indicative of the way that students value their faculty at Carroll Community College.

**Recommendation:**

None

**Standard 11: Educational Offerings**

*The institution’s educational offerings display academic content, rigor, and coherence that are appropriate to its higher education mission. The institution identifies student learning goals and objectives, including knowledge and skills, for its educational offerings.*

The College meets this standard.

**Summary of evidence and findings:**

It is evident that teaching, learning, and student success are the primary purposes of the College.

The Academic Council verified that the process for program development includes review by the library, registrar, financial aid, and division chair offices. One of the first steps in developing and vetting program proposals at Carroll Community College is to have the Director of Learning Outcomes Assessment review the proposal for appropriate measurable outcomes; this is an important foundation to program development. Through the ‘course alignment project’ undertaken in 2009, each program’s learning goals were linked to the adopted general education goals to ensure that programs are designed to offer a coherent student learning experience and to promote synthesis of learning. The annual Faculty Self-Report captures how the faculty collect data on student outcomes for course objectives each semester by indicating how “objectives are tied to the academic plan and divisional objectives.”

Programs are reviewed on a five-year cycle. The College also includes discipline-specific reviews within the program review cycle, ensuring relevance and rigor, especially to meet transfer goals. Examples of recent program modifications were reviewed. The College recently added external reviewers to the program review system and this is an important step in the continual improvement of assessment processes.

The College engages in reviewing indirect measures as indicators of effectiveness at the institutional level. These include measures of developmental student success rates, persistence trends, retention rates, degree completion rates, etc. Participation in nationally normed projects, such as CCSSE and the National Benchmark Project, further enhance the data collection efforts and provide a good source for analysis of outcomes. This analysis led to positive program impacts, although, as noted in the Self-Study, direct measures will require some further refinements. Positive impact on student outcomes was realized with the development of the First Year Success Program and an increase in the number of College Success sections, including a late start section as well as the Academic Communities initiative. These initiatives foster the personal and social development of students.

Carroll Community College has included its CET division into its review process and refinements to CET instruction with more standardized expectations of faculty as well as oversight of CET offerings is planned. Consistency in faculty standards will better match the standards for credit student learning. The planned tracking system of completers of workforce development programs will provide outcomes that will be important to further assessment and improvement activity in the division.

The Library Statistical Databook, the learning resources, facilities, library services, and professional library staff are sufficient to support the educational programs of the College. The College has adopted the Association of College and Research Libraries definition of information literacy and incorporated this standard into the library's instructional program. Librarians and faculty collaborate to deliver library/research sessions and now include a session as a requirement in ENGL101 and as an option to faculty in other disciplines. On-line tutorials are available for distance learning students. The instructional support provided by the media center further enhances the educational and support functions of the library. The library is included in the program review cycle and has made improvements to its delivery of services based on its on-going review.

The College currently offers 40 certificate and degree tracks for instruction. Procedures for transfer of credit and recognition of degrees is included in College publications. The ARTSYS system utilized by Maryland certainly is a useful tool in the transfer process but it is unclear as to how articulation agreements that are specific to the College are addressed.

**Commendation:**

- The College is commended for its thorough program development process that includes the Director of Learning Outcomes Assessment as one of the first stops for program vetting.

**Suggestions:**

- The College's articulation agreements could be shown in a more consistent manner on the website so that a student who is self-advising can more easily see similarities and differences among programs.
- Carroll Community College may want to ensure that the classification of hybrid and distance learning courses for data collection are consistent with MSCHE definitions.
- The College should consistently apply its definitions for learning outcomes, course or program objectives, and course or program goals, especially on syllabi.
- A review of syllabi for multi-section courses should be conducted to ensure all faculty convey the same student learning outcomes for each course when offered.

**Recommendations:**

None

**Standard 12: General Education**

*The institution's curricula are designed so that students acquire and demonstrate college-level proficiency in general education and essential skills, including at least oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, and technological competency.*

The College meets this standard.

**General Comments and Observations on Compliance**

As described in the report, the College convened a General Education committee that used assessment results coupled with the college's mission to formulate the seven GE Learning Goals adopted in January 2009. The first four learning goals are consistent with, and now subsume, the College's previously identified Core Competencies. The college's mission statement claims that the College focuses on the intellectual and personal development needs of the learner. The seven GE Learning Goals are in alignment with that statement. Goals 1 through 4 specifically address the intellectual needs. Goals 5, 6 and 7 more aptly address the learner's personal developmental needs.

Furthermore, the College's mission statement includes the phrasing that the College responds to and embraces an increasingly diverse and changing world. GE Learning Goals 4, 6 and 7 indicate that the College is responding to the increasingly diverse and changing world and is providing learning experiences in line with that philosophy.

The College's GE Mission Statement more clearly specifies that intellectual needs begin with fundamental knowledge that encourages an intellectual curiosity. As a minimum, Goals 1, 2 and 3 address that concept.

Evidence of the assessment of GE courses and the use of the assessment results are fully explained in the Appendix entitled *Process for Designing and Proposing General Education Course*.

Each *Transfer degree* program's list of requirements does clearly distinguish between specific program courses and General Education courses. Courses that are designated as general education are easy for students and advisors to identify in the catalog by the use of special symbol. For individual GE courses listed in the programs' requirements, the GE icon is used consistently in front of each GE course in both the Transfer and the Career program listings. The symbol is also used to designate General Education courses in the Winter and Spring 2011 semester schedules viewable online.

In the report, the College acknowledges that the Academic Council reviews new courses, but that the program review process has the responsibility of maintaining those previously adopted GE courses to ensure that they meet the same criteria. The report also states that there has not been "a systematic assessment of General Education as a program or a sustained and coordinated assessment of the General Education goals across the curriculum." Finally, the College's report states that previously approved GE courses were proven to meet the college's core competencies, not the current set of the first four goals. Therefore, the report explains that further assessment is occurring at the departmental level and cites specific examples.

Goal 4 specifically includes information and technical literacy as a GE goal. Based on the GE committee's recommendation, the report explains that the College now embeds technology skills in each discipline's curriculum rather than require a computer literacy course. The college cites the process it used to assess the courses within varied disciplines prior to the change. The change has been made and now the College plans to reassess the change. This gives evidence that the college has employed a cycle of assessment, review, change, and will reassess.

**Suggestion:**

Carroll Community College should develop and implement a systematic assessment of General Education as a program area.

**Recommendations:**

None

**Standard 13: Related Educational Activities**

*The institution's programs or activities that are characterized by particular content, focus, location, mode of delivery, or sponsorship meet appropriate standards.*

The College meets this standard.

## Summary of evidence and findings:

Carroll Community College adequately adheres to the fundamental elements of this standard as stated in the *Characteristics of Excellence* handbook through its related educational activities primarily in Basic Skills, Continuing Education and Training (CET), and Distance Learning. The College's mission states that the College values and promotes lifelong learning and responds to a changing world.

From the Self-Study Report and materials provided, the evaluation team made the following observations in Related Educational Activities at Carroll Community College:

- The College uses nationally recognized tests, Accuplacer and SAT/ ACT scores, for appropriate placement of students as required in developmental Mathematics, English, Reading courses and tutoring.
- A documented assessment process for developmental education is in place. Based on assessment results, the College continually makes revision to curriculum.
- Continuing Education and Training offers adults and children a wide array of noncredit courses for lifelong education, industry aligned training programs, as well as ABE/GED/ESOL courses.
- The College offers certificate programs for both credit and non-credit which are developed through content specialists employed by the college and local advisory boards to meet the recognized standards in their respective fields. The College is in the process of documenting learning outcomes and assessment methodology for such certificate programs.
- The College has existing policies to award credits for experiential learning through CLEP, field placement, service learning and public school articulations for graduates of specified public school career programs.
- Distance learning offerings include both credit and noncredit courses (through outside vendors) and utilize online, hybrid and video/streaming video formats. The College is committed to scale up online courses through ongoing faculty training and technical support to encourage expansion. Online students receive advising, Blackboard training and help desk support to make their learning experience meaningful. Distance Learning staff recommends Quality Matters standards to be incorporated in the courses and some courses have already passed QM Review process. The College assesses distance learning courses in a variety of ways consistent with other courses.
- Contracted providers and affiliates fill the gap in non-credit educational offerings primarily to meet the demands of employers. These courses are assessed in the same qualitative manner as other CET courses and demonstrate a high level of overall

satisfaction. All contracts are reviewed by the College's Director of Risk Management and counsel.

- Collaboration between Carroll, Howard and Frederick Community Colleges at Mt. Airy to build a shared health services education center is a new model that likely would result in availability of courses in health services to all three county residents that may not be affordable for a single institution to offer.
- Instructional Quality Learning Outcomes initiative should lead to better learning outcomes and assessment results in Continuing Education and Training programs.

### **Recommendations:**

None

### **Standard 14: Student Learning**

*Assessment of student learning demonstrates that, at graduation, or other appropriate points, the institution's students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional and appropriate higher education goals.*

The College meets this standard.

### **General Comments**

Assessment, including assessment of student learning, is one of the two focuses of the Self-Study, indicating the seriousness with which the College has recently placed on assessment. There is overall institutional support for assessment of student learning, both in terms of financial/budgeted support as well as support for training and implementation. There are faculty incentives to continually improve the process. Policies and procedures are in place to insure systematic attention to the processes.

The College has developed program and course student learning outcomes statements for its courses and programs. These are appropriately linked, and documented. Importantly, faculty have not hesitated to be on the forefront for both development of these, and their implementation. Many examples were noted that these student learning outcomes statements are, for the most part, written in measurable forms.

There is evidence that the student learning outcomes are being measured in various ways. Measurement instruments range from national examinations measures to focused devices at the course and class level outcomes. Many of the measures are in various stages of development by faculty, who are at the center of the development of academic assessment activities.

Academic programs have undergone review or are in the process of review via a 5 year cycle. Where required, programs meet national, regional or local standards. There is evidence that

graduates achieve success in their transfer institutions and careers. External agencies, licensing exams and corporate affiliates affirm that the College is generally meeting the required standards for various programs. Importantly, there is evidence that improvements are occurring in courses as a result of the assessment results and that this has now become an ongoing process within departments.

The College is now in a position to take great advantage of the momentum gained through the development of outcomes studies and results. There are many instances of research projects and utilization of assessment results that are worthy of sharing with the larger college community. Vehicles such as seminars, faculty forums, division meetings, adjunct training sessions, can be used for presentations sharing successes and failures, and promoting discussions and debates. This will help to promote further collaborative work in improving instruction as well as give faculty a platform for highlighting such activities. This can also serve as an information link for further planning and budgeting.

### **Suggestion**

Develop faculty and college-wide collegial communication mechanisms to serve as vehicles for dissemination and discussion of academic assessment outcomes.

### **Recommendations**

None