

Report to the  
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students  
of

**State University of New York at New Paltz**  
New Paltz, New York

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:**

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Representing the State University of New York:

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**AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT:**

**President/CEO:**

**Dr. Donald P. Christian**  
Interim President  
State University of New York at New Paltz

**Chief Academic Officer:**

**Dr. Laurel M. Garrick Duhaney**  
Interim Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs  
State University of New York at New Paltz

**SUNY-New Paltz College Council:**

**Kenneth J. Abt**  
Chair  
SUNY-New Paltz College Council

**Chancellor of System:**

**Dr. Nancy Zimpher**  
Chancellor  
State University of New York

**Chair, Board of Trustees (system):**

**Carl T. Hayden**  
Chair  
State University of New York Board of Trustees

## **I. Context and Nature of the Visit**

### **Institutional Overview.**

Initial Accreditation: 1950  
Last Reaffirmed: 2006  
Control: Public  
Affiliation: State University of New York System  
Institution Type: Master's – Larger Programs

### **Scope of Institution at Time of Visit.**

Degrees Offered: Certificate/Diploma, Baccalaureate, Masters  
Branch Campuses: None  
Additional Locations: Albany ASCD, Albany, NY; Ellenville High School, Ellenville, NY; Highland High School, Highland, NY; Kingston Business Resource Center, Kingston, NY; Mahopac High School, Mahopac, NY; Middletown Teacher Center, Middletown, NY; Mohawk Valley Community College, Utica, NY; New Paltz High School, New Paltz, NY; Newburgh City School District, Newburgh, NY; Orange County Community College, Middletown, NY; Orange-Ulster BOCES, Goshen, NY; Otsego BOCES, Stamford, NY; Rockland County Community College, Suffern, NY; Rockland Teacher Center, Garnerville, NY; St. Luke's Hospital, Newburgh, NY; Sullivan County BOCES (Teacher Center), Liberty, NY; Sullivan County Community College, Loch Sheldrake, NY; Tappen Zee High School, Orangeburg, NY; Wallkill Senior High School, Wallkill, NY; Westchester Community College, Valhalla, NY; White Plains Board of Education, White Plains, NY; WSWHE BOCES, Fort Edward, NY.

### **Self-Study Design.**

Comprehensive, organized thematically by six chapters: (1) Mission, Vision, Planning & Resources; (2) Leadership, Faculty & Governance; (3) Student Enrollment, Admissions, Retention & Graduation Rates; (4) Educational Offerings, Including General Education & Related Activities; (5) Student Support Services, Rights & Responsibilities; and (6) Assessment of Institutional Effectiveness & Student Learning.

## **II. Affirmation of Continued Compliance with Eligibility Requirements**

Based on a review of the Self-Study, interviews, the certification statement supplied by the institution and other institutional documents, the Team affirms that the State University of New York at New Paltz continues to meet the eligibility requirements in *Characteristics of Excellence*.

### **III. Compliance with Federal Requirements**

Based on review of the Self-Study, certification by the State University of New York at New Paltz, and interviews, the Team affirms that the institution's Title IV cohort default rate is within federal limits. Additionally, the Team is unaware of any problematic issues relative to state regulatory requirements.

### **IV. Evaluation Overview**

Since SUNY-New Paltz's last decennial accreditation, it has continued to increase the selectivity of students while maintaining stable enrollments. The quality and intellectual depth of the faculty has risen in part through developing standards for reappointment, promotion and tenure and in part through increasing the number of full-time faculty and reducing the College's reliance on part-time faculty. SUNY-New Paltz's evolution into a strong comprehensive, public institution continues to receive local, state, regional and national recognition.

In addition, there have been several changes in top administration. Both the President, Steven Poskanzer, and the Provost, David Lavallee, recently left the institution for other opportunities. The College was well served by both of these leaders who are credited with leading many of the initiatives addressed throughout the Self-Study. Currently there is a continuation of the presidential search with the likely interim reappointment of the current Interim President, Donald Christian, into the 2011-12 academic year. As a result, the potential for challenge was high, but campus personnel under the interim leadership responded extraordinarily to the challenge and students were not affected by the turnover. The current leadership has focused on maintaining SUNY-New Paltz's upward path and addressing its budget difficulties with transparency and integrity.

Budgets continue to be a challenge – as in many other states in 2011. The campus community appears to have effectively managed the downturn but action in Albany remains beyond its control. The campus is fully aware of the challenges it faces in the upcoming state budget management agendas. The Evaluation Team commends the institution and its senior leadership for honest and transparent communication particularly regarding the current budget challenges.

As one of the largest employers in the Mid-Hudson Valley Region, SUNY-New Paltz has been fortunate to recruit and retain high quality faculty and staff dedicated to ensuring students receive a quality “inside and outside the classroom” education. In addition, evidence of academic quality is demonstrated by the numerous (ABET, ASHA, CCNE, NASD, NASM, NAST, NCATE) program accreditations achieved across disciplines.

The Team concurs with the improvements the College identified for itself in the years ahead as discussed throughout the Self-Study.

Overall, SUNY-New Paltz knows its mission and is performing in an exceptional manner. It is an institution of solid values, integrity, and a place of significant student learning and success.

## **V. Compliance with Accreditation Standards**

### **Chapter 1: Mission, Vision, Planning & Resources**

This section covers the following standards: Standard 1: Mission and Goals; Standard 2: Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal; Standard 3: Institutional Resources; Standard 6: Integrity

**The institution meets these standards based on the evidence presented in this chapter and Chapters 3, 4, and 5.**

### **Chapter 2: Leadership, Faculty & Governance**

This section covers the following standards: Standard 4: Leadership and Governance; Standard 5: Administration; Standard 10: Faculty

**The institution meets these standards based on the evidence presented in this chapter.**

### **Chapter 3: Student Enrollment, Admissions, Retention & Graduation Rates**

This section covers the following standards: Standard 6: Integrity; Standard 8: Student Admissions and Retention

**The institution meets these standards based on the evidence presented in this chapter and Chapters 1, 4, and 5.**

### **Chapter 4: Educational Offerings, Including General Education & Related Activities**

This section covers the following standards: Standard 6: Integrity; Standard 11: Educational Offerings; Standard 12: General Education; Standard 13: Related Educational Activities

**The institution meets these standards (based on the evidence presented in this chapter and Chapters 1, 3, and 5.**

### **Chapter 5: Student Support Services, Rights & Responsibilities**

This section covers the following standards: Standard 6: Integrity; Standard 9: Student Support Services; Standard 13: Related Educational Activities

**The institution meets these standards based on the evidence presented in this chapter and Chapters 1, 3, and 4.**

### **Chapter 6: Assessment of Institutional Effectiveness and Student Learning**

This section covers the following standards: Standard 7: Institutional Effectiveness; Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning

**The institution meets these standards based on the evidence presented in this chapter.**

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

**The institution meets this standard.**

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

SUNY-New Paltz, a constituent of the 64-campus system, The State University of New York, “has a mission statement that clearly defines its purpose within the context of higher education and clearly identifies whom it serves and what it intends to accomplish.” The current mission statement was reviewed in 2006 and confirms SUNY-New Paltz’s commitment to “providing high quality, affordable education to students from all social and economic backgrounds.” The College ensures the high quality education and supporting services it provides its students through its dedicated faculty and campus community. The Team salutes the College for creating a vibrant intellectual environment that celebrates diversity and supports active participation by its members in scholarly, artistic, and outreach activities.

The Team has also noted the College’s laudable core values that include (1) academic excellence, (2) accessibility, (3) diversity, and (4) regional engagement that speaks to its commitment to high quality and diversity. In addition, the College is responding effectively to regional workforce needs by producing graduates that have knowledge, skills, and confidence to contribute to their communities, the nation and global society. The Team agrees that the three goals—excellence in comprehensive programming and teaching, connection to the culture and economy of the Mid-Hudson Valley, and diversity in the racial, ethnic, and socio-economic makeup of the student body--align well with the mission and the eight Vision Points in the Vision Plan that guide all strategic decisions and activities of SUNY-New Paltz. It is important that the next strategic plan builds upon these goals and Vision Points. The Team further agrees with the Self-Study that the next five-year strategic planning initiative should involve the wider College community to ensure shared ownership and to facilitate implementation.

### **Suggestion:**

The Evaluation Team concurs with the recommendation that the next campus planning initiative include a strategic plan that builds on, translates, and extends the Vision Plan and Vision Points that have served the institution so well.

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

**The institution meets this standard.**

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

SUNY-New Paltz has been guided by a Vision Plan that was established in 2005 by then-President Steven Poskanzer. Grounded in the College’s mission and supported by the Memorandum of Understanding (MOUII) established in 2005 and finalized in 2006 with the SUNY system, the Plan appears to have effectively focused the College on eight Vision Points or priority areas, resulting in notable gains in student selectivity and academic quality, retention and graduation rates, and the percentage of full-time teaching faculty, among others. These achievements have been made while also sustaining the College’s commitment to diversity and accessibility and the economic and educational needs of the surrounding region.

The College's emphasis on assessment is evident in the metrics and other key performance indicators used to determine the institution's effectiveness in achieving goals articulated in the Vision Plan and MOU II as highlighted in the Self-Study.

SUNY-New Paltz should be commended for the degree of detail and transparency with which information is shared across the institution regarding the annual budget process via its web-based College Budget Update, community forums, various reports to faculty and the college community at large, and through such groups as the Budget, Goals, and Plans Committee, the Wonk Group, and the Administrative Council. This is particularly important now as the College works, within the context of its mission and Vision Plan, to respond quickly and effectively to significant SUNY funding cuts adopted for 2011-12.

SUNY-New Paltz has a considerable job ahead in light of these proposed funding cuts and the current economic climate as it seeks to sustain the academic, enrollment, and reputational progress of the past several years while remaining true to its mission-based commitment to diversity and accessibility. The College is at a critical juncture with the search for a new President and the call at the SUNY system level to support SUNY Strategic Plan 2010, which defines six priority areas for the system in the years ahead. SUNY-New Paltz will do well to address the recommendations made in the Self-Study when it embarks on its next planning process, determining the continued relevance of the current Vision Points. Among these are the call for the establishment within all units of clearly articulated goals and action plans in support of institutional priorities and of a mechanism by which to communicate and monitor them more widely throughout the institution. This will require leadership at all levels, ensuring broad-based understanding of and support for the College's future vision and direction.

### **Standard 3: Resources**

#### **The institution meets this standard.**

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

The Standards of Excellence describe two components of Standard 3, Institutional Resources. First, there is the "quantity" aspect and, second, there is the effective and efficient use of resources. As evident in the Self-Study and other supporting documentation, SUNY-New Paltz has adequate human, financial and facilities resources to accomplish its mission.

While separate audited financial statements are not available for a particular campus, there are annual IPEDS reports for each campus prepared by SUNY System Administration. In looking just at the "Core Budget," which is essentially the operating expenses supported by tuition, fees and appropriation, SUNY-New Paltz is spending more than it is bringing in. The Self-Study reports actual net income for the core budget of \$1.5 million in FY 08, \$ (0.9) million in FY 09, \$1.3 million in FY 10 and projects FY 11 to be \$(3.2) million. This should be viewed in the context of net assets of \$7 million at the close of FY 10 based on information provided by the College. Discussions with a number of senior members of the administration, confirmed that the College approved deficit spending in order to provide the necessary resources to move forward with the College's Vision Plan.

The exact impact of the new State Budget is not yet known. However, the administration estimates the reduction could be in the order of \$2 to \$3 million. Plans are underway to address the FY 11 and FY 12 deficits so as to enter FY 13 with a balanced budget.

The Self-Study states that the College has 2 million square feet of buildings on 214 acres. The Self-Study and other material describe an active maintenance program which has benefited from recent

infusions of State Capital funding. There are several major construction projects recently completed, now underway or in planning which will further increase the campus facilities. These include the 57,000 square foot, \$26.1 million Athletic and Wellness Center and the attractive addition to the Student Center. The College reports it has in place a facilities maintenance program which should help to assure continued quality of facilities. In addition, the SUNY-New Paltz Foundation has acquired 42 acres for future faculty and student housing. Further, plant personnel have actively pursued energy management.

The Self-Study does not provide information on human resources in general. However, the plans would appear to call for a number of faculty positions to accomplish its future goals. It should be noted that the College has made significant progress towards its goals of reducing reliance on adjunct faculty. The current budget issues may well slow this effort in the near term.

While there are fewer employees now on campus, the College indicates that there are sufficient personnel to implement the critical elements of the mission and Vision Plan. The administrative personnel with whom the Team met appear to be competent, energetic and aware of the mission and how their specific area contributed to the success of the Plan

The College is in the process of updating its Information Technology infrastructure. The Self-Study describes a program that included new student records system, expanded use of the Blackboard Learning System and 90 smart classrooms (about 80% of the total classrooms). Faculty, students and staff indicated that there are adequate IT resources on campus.

Turning to the allocation of resources, the Self-Study states the budget process is mission driven. The process is supported by the Budget, Goals and Plans Committee. The College reports that the 2009-2010 Budget Plan was created with considerable input from the campus community.

There appears to be considerable discussion on the expense side of the budget but very limited discussion of income. While tuition and appropriations are the two main sources, it is, according to the chart, an “all funds” budget. This means that other income such as Foundation proceeds, are factored into the evaluation and allocation process, but it is not clear how this is accomplished.

Based on information on the web, the separately incorporated Foundation Board includes both alumni and other “friends” of the College. The College contracts with the Foundation to support fund raising. Fund raising priorities include scholarships, program support and distinguished speaker series.

### **Commendation:**

The Evaluation Team commends the institution and its senior leadership for an honest and transparent communication about the current budget challenges.

### **Suggestion:**

Given the continued decline in State support, the College may wish to consider applying rigor to the costing of the budget plan, including objectives such as the desire to increase the number of full-time faculty and the identification of resources to implement the plan. It is understood that the current economic conditions as well as the Presidential transition make these projections more difficult at this time. However, documenting the revenue and expense projections in a more formal process may assist the College in tracking the inevitable changes that will occur.



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

**The institution meets this standard.**

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

The College at New Paltz is part of the State University of New York (SUNY) system. As such, both the “Central Office” in Albany and the campus play roles in governance. Each has specific roles. A “Memorandum of Understanding” delineates the major objectives and expectations of the central office with respect to SUNY-New Paltz. This is true of all the SUNY institutions.

The Self-Study and the SUNY web site outline the roles and responsibilities of the SUNY Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees has 16 members and is responsible for the overall system. The Chancellor of the system reports to the Board of Trustees. College-wide policies are set by the Chancellor and the Board of Trustees. The President of the campus reports to and is evaluated by the Chancellor.

On campus, the Self-Study reports there is a functioning executive leadership team in place. While it should be noted that several key positions including the President and Provost are filled on an interim basis, there is nothing to suggest that the presence of interim appointees creates challenges in the short term. The organization chart reveals a fairly standard structure with the operating departments reporting up through functional vice-presidents.

There is active faculty governance, which SUNY-New Paltz describes as, a “...complex web of faculty constituencies and responsibilities.” Active participation of the students is included on many of the governance committees.

There is an on-going system of evaluations which includes the President, the Vice Presidents and the Deans.

The “College Council” is appointed by the Governor to serve in an advisory capacity to the President. The Council also recommends presidential candidates, reviews major plans, considers certain local regulations and approves the naming of buildings.

The state system provides significant guidance on written policies and procedures. In addition, SUNY-New Paltz reports it maintains an array of manuals to document campus operations.

### **Suggestions:**

SUNY-New Paltz is encouraged to complete in as expeditious fashion as practical the presidential search now underway so campus governance can rely on permanent rather than interim appointments.

New Paltz is encouraged to actively pursue the review of its governance structure as noted in the Self-Study.

## **Standard 5: Administration**

**The institution meets this standard.**

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

Dr. Donald Christian has served as interim president since Spring 2010. Having just been appointed provost in 2009, he has stepped up to the role of chief executive after only a short time at SUNY-New

Paltz. However, the leadership team has remained intact, and others have been recruited from the administration and faculty to address the temporary vacancies as a result of the shuffling of positions. According to the Self-Study, the team “is focused on maintaining SUNY-New Paltz’s upward trajectory and addressing our budgetary difficulties with transparency in line with our mission and Vision Plan.” While the president and several of the officers are in interim positions, they have not been afraid to make decisions and have worked at creating or continuing transparent processes. Dr. Christian has used the Vision Plan developed under the watch of the former president as guide for planning and addressing the needs of the institution. The move toward stable leadership of the institution is slow, however, with the presidential search process now extended as the result of finalists withdrawing from the process in March, the president and his Cabinet are committed to moving forward using the Vision Plan to develop more concrete goals and action plans so as to not lose momentum. Especially given the budget challenges of SUNY, the SUNY-New Paltz leadership is prepared to make difficult decisions while maintaining the Vision Plan as its guide.

The College has a number of bodies for either decision-making or consultation. The smaller group, charged with making managerial decisions is the President’s Cabinet, comprised of the President, Provost, the three Vice Presidents, and the Chief of Staff/Assistant Vice President of Communication. An advisory group, known as the Wonk Group, includes all of the President’s Cabinet as well as the Associate and many Assistant Vice Presidents, all the Academic Deans, reports directly to the President, and meets frequently. An expanded version of the Wonk Group - known as the Administrative Council - including department chairs and directors was recently formed by the President as a way to provide greater transparency, flow of information, and sharing of best practices and issues. Members of the larger groups reported that they are in practice consultative groups and speak to the high level of transparency afforded by senior administration.

The Administrative Council put in place in the Fall 2010 semester and meeting twice per semester, is a communication and consultation vehicle that, among other things, shared best practices in successful assessment. Improvements in the Career Resource Center, noted in the Self-Study, grew out of earlier consultation and assessment.

## **Standard 6: Integrity**

### **The institution meets this standard.**

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

The Self-Study, additional documentation, and campus interviews all indicate overall ethical practices as they regard the College’s administration, faculty, and staff. The Office of Internal Controls follows the *Public Officer’s Law Code of Ethics* and annually reports its compliance to the State of New York in the areas of control environment, risk assessment, control activities, information and communication, and monitoring.

The Office of Internal Controls created a position in the last three years that has developed training to educate and communicate this information to the campus community. Additionally, the IRB and Research and Sponsored Programs work closely with faculty, staff, and students on research and grant proposals to insure that they are in compliance with established ethical standards.

The College complies with accepted guidelines to protect the confidentiality of student information and the Registrar’s Office is informed and advised by the Information Security and Internal Controls Committees. Policies and procedures for safe and secure maintenance of student records are effective, well understood, and consistently implemented. The records systems are restricted to

individuals who have a clear “educational need to know.” Access to sensitive information is restricted and information exchanged electronically between offices is encrypted. Training and consultation on FERPA regulations are offered for all staff that handle confidential student information.

Hiring practices follow clear, established guidelines from their initial advertisement to application review to the interview process. Once employees are hired, information about department, personnel, academic, and college policies is provided through active orientation and mentor programs.

This same transparency is evidenced in the availability of other important information like course catalogs, assessments, department and committee reports, and hiring practices. This information may be easily located in a variety of ways from verbal inquiry to print copies to online.

Further evidence of adherence to integrity may be seen in Standards 2, 4, and 8 where the College’s honest and transparent practices are repeatedly noted and commended. The Team concurs with the Chapter 5 recommendations in the Self-Study that call for “Evaluating standards and processes for handling cases of academic misconduct, revising written policies as warranted, and developing an implementation plan that will increase faculty understanding and buy-in for the value of addressing these issues comprehensively.”

## **Standard 7: Institutional Effectiveness**

**The institution meets this standard.**

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

The Self-Study provides evidence of organized and sustained use of assessment in both academic and administrative units to inform decision-making and resource allocation, determine achievement of unit and institutional goals and student learning outcomes, and initiate programmatic improvement. The Campus-Wide Assessment Advisory Council has primary oversight responsibility for assessment in academic and administrative units with support from the Provost’s Office, associate deans, and the Office of Institutional Research and Planning.

Assessment is evident in varying degrees of implementation throughout academic and administrative areas, although not all units have yet developed or implemented formal assessments. At the institution level, the College has employed a variety of assessment data, tracking key performance indicators both internally and externally against a set of benchmark institutions. In addition, the Self-Study served as an opportunity to assess each of the College’s eight Vision Points, confirming the degree to which the College achieved goals within these institution-wide areas of focus.

SUNY-New Paltz is to be commended for the culture of assessment that it has cultivated to date among faculty and staff who, in large part, value the role of assessment to support evidence-based decision-making and improve programs and services. The College’s assessment model, characterized by collegiality and collaboration, has fit well within its structure and culture, particularly in establishing assessment as an institutional priority, educating faculty and staff regarding assessment tools and methods, overseeing the process, and advising units accordingly.

The Self-Study recognizes, however, that this oversight structure will be insufficient in moving the College to the next level of assessment. In particular, the Self-Study and assessment leaders acknowledge the need to reconsider the use of one committee to oversee both academic and administrative assessment and to formally assign point persons to coordinate assessment in administrative divisions similar to the role of associate deans in the schools and colleges. A new structure, one that bridges collegiality and collaboration with greater accountability, will go a long way to ensure that all academic and administrative units are engaged in meaningful assessment, employ a

wider variety of assessment tools and data, and utilize data not only to implement programmatic change but to determine, in its implementation, the degree to which such change is achieving its intended effect. Further emphasis on outcomes based assessment and “closing the loop” will serve the College well as its assessment work progresses, fostering even further improvement at all levels of the institution.

### **Commendation:**

The Evaluation Team commends the institution for the culture of assessment that it has cultivated to date among faculty and staff who, in large part, value the role of assessment to support evidence-based decision-making and improve programs and services.

## **Standard 8 – Student Admissions and Retention**

**The institution meets this standard.**

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

For the past decade, SUNY-New Paltz has intentionally sought enrollment stability and has achieved it in undergraduate enrollment, although graduate enrollment has declined. SUNY-New Paltz has seen significant increases in demand for admission, which has allowed the College to increase selectivity and the academic quality of the students. The improved academic profile of its applicants and enrolled students has resulted in significantly improved student retention and graduation rates: first-year 2008 retention at 87%, four-year graduation at 52%, and six-year graduation at 67%. Student diversity has remained fairly constant over the last five years, as the percentage of students from traditionally under-represented groups has ranged from 24% to 29% of the class.

Admissions policies and criteria are available to assist prospective students in making informed decisions. Findings from assessment measures showed concerns with handling of questions and timeliness of responses to email and telephone inquiries, which resulted in the implementation of a training program and introduction of streamlined customer service procedures. Prospective students receive information through a variety of methods, such as website pages, view books, publications, recruitment events, and letters and communication from academic departments.

The population of enrolled students from economically and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds who are not eligible for general admission and are admitted through the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) represents approximately 8% of undergraduates. SUNY-New Paltz provides a comprehensive program of support through the EOP which allows these students to succeed at an outstanding rate. In addition to the EOP, the College has several other retention initiatives: the First-Year Initiative, First-Year Interest Groups and the Scholars Mentorship Program, all of which improve and assist student retention.

Improved dissemination of accurate and comprehensive information regarding financial aid was the main focus of the Financial Aid Office’s assessment plan in 2008-09. As a result, the office developed a number of initiatives and follow-up assessment showed that 90% of students accepted their aid on line without assistance, manual packaging of single semester students decreased from 100% to 14%, and all students received a minimum of three electronic notifications prompting timely application for financial aid.

The Orientation website provides appropriate information on academic placement assessment, including math and composition placement tests, as well as Advanced Placement equivalencies. The College website publishes the list of Advanced Placement subjects that have been assigned equivalency

at SUNY-New Paltz. Consequently the Admissions website includes a link to the SUNY-New Paltz Transfer Course Equivalency database, designed to show how credit from other colleges will transfer to the College. In addition, SUNY-New Paltz has comprehensive, curriculum-specific articulation agreements with several two-year schools. Information on transfer credit equivalencies from dozens of schools is easily searchable on the website. One area of concern is the College's decision not to offer housing to transfer students, which has resulted in decreased engagement of these students in campus life.

The College engages in ongoing monitoring of retention and graduation rates, and clearly links success in attracting highly qualified students to high retention and graduation rates. Geographic diversity is part of the goals for a diverse student body; this diversity is better achieved in first-year student populations than in transfer student populations. Prospective students can find general education goals and learning outcomes information on the College website, though it requires more than two clicks to find it. Information on learning outcomes for specific programs and information on institution-wide assessment results are not easily available on the website.

### **Commendation:**

The Team commends the institution for progressively higher retention and graduation rates that places the institution at higher-than-national-average levels, both overall and for students from underrepresented groups. The Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) has a significant positive impact on retention and graduation rates of economically disadvantaged students, and we commend the program for its evidence of structural changes and expansion based on assessment results.

### **Suggestion:**

Administrative units in Enrollment Management have developed assessment plans and assessment summary reports. While assessment plans are a good start, the units need to move away from developing primarily action plans, to plans that assess effectiveness or impact of their services.

## **Standard 9 – Student Support Services**

**The institution meets this standard.**

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

New Paltz demonstrates a clear institutional commitment to student success and the achievement of student learning outcomes. Although admissions standards have risen in the last ten years and SUNY-New Paltz students' SAT scores and high school GPAs denote better preparation for college-level work, the College provides academic support services in a variety of ways, from composition sections that offer supplemental support to tutoring in more than 130 courses. The College offers a Supplemental Writing Workshop Composition Program, as well as developmental courses in mathematics with an associated Math Lab. The Center for Academic Development and Learning includes the tutoring and writing centers, provides courses in critical thinking for first-year students, and provides one-on-one tutoring for students with learning disabilities. Students who are identified as being "at risk," receive academic advisement, personal counseling, career development, study-skills instruction, tutoring, financial advisement, and student leadership opportunities. All of these programs are staffed by qualified professionals with at least a master's degree.

SUNY-New Paltz provides a variety of student support services through the division of Student Affairs. The Self-Study highlights the success of closing the loop on assessment results for the Career Resource Center. The program was relocated, saw an increase in budget, and enjoys greater collaboration with the academic departments. The Student Activities and Union Services offer extensive programming to encourage student interaction and socializing. The College offers significant leadership development through its Emerging Leaders Program and more than one hundred student organizations. A notable service is the peer mentoring program available through the Disabilities Resource Center to first-year and new transfer students. The Student Affairs staff is responsive to new perceived needs among students; for example, an increase in initial visits to the Psychological Counseling Center for eating disorders in recent years resulted in the development of a week-long series of programs targeting these disorders.

New Paltz has excellent student advisement procedures and processes. The Academic Advising Center provides essential transition and advising services for new students, offers support for students who have not chosen a major and those in pre-major programs, provides referrals to academic and personal support services, offers advisement about degree requirements and completion problems, and provides timely information about academic policies and procedures. Assessment of advising shows improvement in student satisfaction. Further, because transfer students are not offered housing on campus, the advising staff becomes the primary connection to the College outside the classroom, a task that is performed effectively in conjunction with the academic departments.

The academic performance of student-athletes is reviewed each semester by the Academic Standing Committee which includes the director of athletics. The Assessment Plan Update identified as one of its goals to assess and improve the quality of experience for student athletes. Results from two years of assessment have led to the implementation of several initiatives, such as the restructuring of the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee, dedicated staff to promote academic success of athletes, and revamping the Leadership Academy for student athletes.

Effectiveness of these support services is assessed through procedures established by each program or office and through the Student Opinion Survey, a SUNY System survey that provides cross-institutional benchmarks and enables the College to assess progress with respect to the degree to which the institution is meeting student needs. Assessment plans were provided for a variety of programs, with the majority of them relying on student satisfaction surveys.

### **Commendation:**

The Evaluation Team commends the institution for its outstanding commitment to student success by faculty and staff and evidence of structural changes and expansion of student support services based on assessment results.

### **Suggestion:**

The Team suggests the institution move to the next level in assessment of student services by utilizing greater variety of data gathering methods, expanding scope of assessment to student learning outcomes, implementing changes based on assessment results, and further assessing new approaches to determine whether changes were effective.

### **Standard 10: Faculty.**

## **The Institution meets this standard.**

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

This prepared and qualified faculty includes, as of 2009-10, 160 tenured faculty, 113 tenure-track faculty, 52 other full-time faculty, and 340 part-time faculty. SUNY-New Paltz faculty are expected to mentor new colleagues, and take this responsibility seriously. There are professional development opportunities for faculty, including pre-tenure fellowships. SUNY-New Paltz enjoys a “long tradition of shared governance,” offering faculty the opportunity to participate in institutional decision-making, cultivating transparency, and avoiding conflicts between union and governance. While confident about the progress the campus has made in recent years, faculty worry about the eventual harm to quality from state budget cuts. Faculty salaries are, as one administrator bluntly stated, “low.” The Self-Study notes, “Policies governing faculty reappointment, tenure, promotion and salary increase should be clearly articulated at all levels of decision making.”

Faculty now submit more applications for external grant funding and have won more awards. SUNY-New Paltz has implemented strategies for recruiting faculty from diverse backgrounds, and has succeeded in attracting and promoting women. Campus discussion notes that faculty of color have been hired, but retaining them has been challenging. A significant initiative has been investment in full-time faculty lines and a successful “shift away from the use of part-time faculty,” but continuing to hire new permanent faculty in lieu of adjuncts may not be fiscally sustainable. The College’s attention to faculty quality is connected to a doubling of applications over the last 10 years and to an increase in graduation rates. SUNY–New Paltz Faculty hired over the last 10 years seem more passionate about combined teaching and research than those hired earlier. The Self-Study claims “substantial progress in clarifying the expectations for faculty performance in research and teaching,” though faculty opinion on this issue is divided, with faculty not always sure what “counts,” especially in research with undergraduates. Focus groups confirm “that a culture of major assessment has begun to thrive among many of the faculty.”

### **Suggestions:**

SUNY-New Paltz may wish to develop chair training and review its new faculty orientation.

The faculty may wish to define the “teacher-scholar model” again.

The Team concurs with the Self-Study recommendation that policies governing faculty reappointment, tenure, promotion, and salary increases be clearly articulated at all levels of decision making.

The Team suggests salaries be reviewed internally and against institutional peers to be sure that they are competitive and in light of the challenges that may arise resulting from dispersed faculty that may not be able to afford to live nearby.

SUNY-New Paltz may wish to consider investigating how to meet student demand, including by reviewing workload and scrutinizing its hiring plans to determine whether it has the resources to carry them out.

## **Standard 11: Educational Offerings.**

**The Institution meets this standard.**

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

General education unites all students in a “shared liberal arts core,” regardless of which of the 55 undergraduate majors students take. The College has made thoughtful recommendations to itself for the improved assessment of majors, and learning outcomes appear on most syllabi. There is a desire to “expand [graduate] offerings,” yet also concern with the ability to fund such programs. Any major can go abroad; s/he can also engage in faculty-mentored research, now a hallmark of SUNY-New Paltz and supported by a budget of about \$100,000. The honors program is well developed, extends across campus, and adds value to the experience of its participants, but sometimes struggles to convince departments to share faculty as teachers. Students do not perceive tension between professional and liberal-arts programs.

### **Suggestions:**

SUNY-New Paltz may wish to review its commitment to and direction in graduate education.

The Team concurs with the recommendation that SUNY-New Paltz investigate, and, if appropriate, pursue, AACSB accreditation for the MBA program.

In the area of program assessment plans “recommend peer [teaching] evaluations -- ”SUNY-New Paltz may wish to consider requiring, not just recommending, them.

### **Recommendation:**

Although assessment is, per the Self-Study, formally “in place in most units,” SUNY-New Paltz should put into place meaningful assessment for all academic units, and all syllabi should include learning outcomes or objectives.

## **Standard 12: General Education**

**The institution meets this standard.**

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

According to the Self-Study additional documentation, and campus interviews, SUNY-New Paltz exceeds the SUNY General Education (GE) requirements and its courses consciously strive to incorporate the competencies in GE III of systemic inquiry, effective expression, information literacy, and ethical reflection. The sample of the GE course syllabi reflect the addressed competency areas through specified course objectives.

The College has also committed to increasing the number of full-time faculty and decreasing the number of part-time faculty by specifically seeking to hire tenure-track candidates who are enthusiastic



and supportive of teaching GE courses. The College further addresses its desire to meet GE competencies by providing support, training, and stipend incentives for the part-time faculty.

The College has also established a GE competency assessment system where critical thinking is assessed yearly and the other competencies assessed on a three-year cycle. The Self-Study indicates that the GE program is in the second three-year cycle. The GE program as a whole is traditionally reviewed every ten years.

The Liberal Education Ad Hoc Committee was recently formed in Fall 2010 with “the aim of engaging faculty and other campus community members in a conversation, review, and analysis of philosophies and standards about educational aims, including GE.” This committee is the first step in a process to revise the current GE III program in its upcoming ten-year review and take into account the recent resolutions from SUNY Chancellor Zimpher that were adopted by the SUNY Board of Trustees in Spring 2010.

Campus interviews with faculty indicated that there are mixed feelings about the GE III, indicating that some faculty are not enthusiastic about teaching them. Students, however, were overwhelmingly positive in their remarks about GE requirements. They noted that GE courses often influenced their chosen majors, the variety of choices was appreciated, the classes gave them an appreciation of other fields, and meeting the GE requirements did not impede their degree progress.

#### **Suggestion:**

Because there is a perception that some of the faculty are not “excited” about General Education, the College may wish to use the new revision process as a way to reengage the faculty in this part of the curriculum, clarifying ties to majors. SUNY-New Paltz may wish to build in a periodic review of General Education and of curriculum in general (e.g., require review every 10 years).

#### **Standard 13 – Related Educational Activities**

**The institution meets this standard.**

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

SUNY-New Paltz provides appropriate services for admitted under-prepared students and assesses them to identify ways to improve such services. The Center for Academic Development and Learning oversees the tutoring and writing centers, provides courses in critical thinking for first-year students, and provides one-on-one tutoring by a disabilities specialist for students with learning disabilities. The Tutoring and Writing Center Semester Reports collate results of student assessments of their experiences, as well as review the achievement of students who participate in the services. Supplemental Writing Workshop Composition courses, Comp I and Comp II, are provided for those deficient based on placement. Entering students are given a Math Placement Level based on their high school record. If needed, students are placed into college algebra or college mathematics. These developmental courses are credit-bearing per state requirements and count towards graduation.

The EOP program evaluates peer tutoring. The College surveys students who utilize tutoring services as to whether tutors were effective. If not, feedback is provided to tutors. The Scholars Mentorship Program, comprised of self-identified students of color who enter under regular admission

has established an advisory council that includes students who have successfully completed the program as well as alumni. The council provides suggestions for improvement and is also a way for these students to maintain involvement after their first year. The AMP and C-Step programs have the goal to increase the number of underrepresented minorities into the STEM field. At least 80% of their students have at least one internship or fieldwork course. A number of students overlap with this program and EOP. Required by the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the state to evaluate, they subsequently use feedback from students and internship workplace supervisors to make changes to the program.

Experiential learning at SUNY-New Paltz is mainly in the form of field courses for majors requiring some type of field experience and internships. A limited amount of service learning courses are available. Experiential learning experiences are self-reported by students in the College's Fieldwork Report (a database used to submit placement location and details). A survey of academic department internship programs was conducted in 2007, and the Provost's Internship Advisory Council submitted a report with recommendations in 2008. It was determined that among other recommendations, there are no established institutional standards for awarding credits for internships and similar courses. In terms of assessment, a variety of methods are used by department and programs based on their needs. However, it was reported that the diversity of methods may cause inconsistency in assessing student learning.

New Paltz is the SUNY gateway for international service learning. Assessment of experiential learning is determined at the departmental level. Recently, the College has begun collecting data on internships from all departments that offer them. This has increased visibility of internships. A focus group with students was also utilized.

Non-credit offerings are provided through the Center for Research, Regional Education, and Outreach (CRREO). In 2007 CRREO transitioned from offering continuing education programs to focusing on regional education, as it has two community colleges and the Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) in the areas that are assertive towards continuing education. Rather, they focus on providing programs that the community colleges and BOCES are not. They also partner with regional organizations to host conferences. They have been successful bringing regional groups to the College as it is considered a neutral venue.

In terms of branch campuses, additional locations, and other instructional sites, CRREO is responsible for the oversight for facilities and quality of collaboration between extension course sites and SUNY-New Paltz. All courses are taught by SUNY-New Paltz faculty at regional locations such as community colleges, teacher centers, and BOCES. In addition, University in the High School affords high school students the opportunity to take freshman-level college courses from their high school for a small fee. Teachers with appropriate credentials who must meet the same standards as SUNY-New Paltz adjunct professors are certified by the College and utilize the same syllabus and materials as the professors on campus. Assessments and learning outcomes are measured in the courses at these sites in the same manner as on campus courses. Support services for students at other locations are arranged through the instructor. For example, user IDs and passwords have been generated to enable University in the High School students to use SUNY-New Paltz library databases.

Online courses are primarily available during the summer, serving mostly SUNY-New Paltz students. Courses taught online must be approved by department chairs, deans, and school-based oversight bodies. Guidelines are also established and must be followed by the Curriculum Committee for undergraduate courses and by the Graduate Council, for graduate courses. A faculty-oversight process has been in place since 2004, whereby courses proposed for online learning are reviewed at many levels to ensure a good fit, appropriate training and electronic resources are available, appropriate pedagogy is utilized, and a robust enrollment can be projected. Compensation is also available through CRREO, which follows a parallel process of approval. The Self-Study notes that the demand for online

and hybrid courses during the academic year is increasing, and how to respond to this demand needs to be determined. However, this concern is not identified in the recommendations section of this chapter. An Ad-Hoc Online Task Force has been convened by the Provost, comprised of faculty and professional staff to identify the future of online learning at SUNY-New Paltz. There is a sense that selected online programs are in the future of the College. IT has been consulted throughout the growth of online learning to ensure that adequate infrastructure and support mechanisms are in place to handle the increased demand on their systems and support structure. Online learning is a collaborative effort among academic departments, the deans, CRREO, the Center for Teaching and Learning, and IT Services.

As a related educational activity, the Dorsky Museum is a hidden gem! It supports the fine arts programs, is a resource to classes across the curriculum, a space for reflection and meditation, and a valuable asset to the community. While it did not participate in the Middle States Self-Study process directly, it does demonstrate sound assessment and feedback loop practices.

### **Commendation:**

The Evaluation Team commends the leadership and staff of the Dorsky Museum for its sound planning and evaluative practices, resourcefulness, and outreach to the campus and regional community to make art relevant in many forms and for many purposes.

### **Suggestions:**

The Team suggests that SUNY-New Paltz pursue the recommendation described in the Self-Study for strengthening the experiential learning opportunities on campus.

It is suggested that SUNY-New Paltz utilize the Ad-Hoc Online Task Force as established to identify its niche with online learning and utilize it to strengthen its programs, enhance revenue, and make available selected programs to a broader audience.

The Team concurs with the Self-Study recommendation to offer recruitment scholarships that would enable the College to maintain and improve its edge in a highly competitive market. The Team acknowledges, as does the Self-Study that acquiring a significant endowment and expanding university advancement is an enormous and complex challenge.

## **Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning**

### **The institution meets the standard.**

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

The Team concluded that significant progress has continued to be made on assessment of student learning since the Periodic Review Report of 2006. The College has devoted resources in its support for assessment and made sustained investment in professional development through on-campus and off-campus workshops for its faculty and staff. It is not surprising that programs with external professional accreditations are further along with creating a culture of assessment and can adapt the assessment plans and data collected for such accreditations to meet Middle States requirements for the assessment of student learning outcomes.

Each school coordinates its own assessment process and with limited coordination at the institutional level there is variability among departments and programs. A majority of departments provide students opportunities to learn what they need to know through capstones courses/experiences

including senior seminars, and internships. All Education candidates take all the required New York certification examinations. In 2010, Early Childhood and Childhood Education candidates scored above the pass score of 220 in seven content areas of the State Examination but scored below the pass score in Constructed Response which resulted in curricular change. Other programs consider all courses students take and utilize individual quizzes, assignments and other activities as tools for assessment. Clearly, these course embedded assessment efforts create complexity of data collection and analysis efforts for assessment.

The Campus-Wide Assessment Advisory Council (CWAAC), which includes faculty participation, ensures a sustained assessment process for improving institutional effectiveness and student learning. The Associate Provost who also serves as Dean of the Graduate School coordinates and supports campus-wide major field assessment initiatives including coordination of General Education with SUNY System Administration. In addition, each school has an associate dean whose responsibilities include working closely with departments and faculty in the school on designing and implementing assessment processes. These processes align with the College's mission and clearly articulated expected student program learning outcomes, assessment methods and analyses to provide evidence of what students know, think, and can do at the conclusion of their chosen majors. This emphasizes the importance SUNY-New Paltz attaches to systematic, meaningful, and effective assessment process that yield useful data and analyses to support policy, curricular, and instructional decisions concerning the assessment of student learning.

The Team agrees with the findings of the Self-Study that although SUNY-New Paltz continues to make good progress on meeting the requirements of Standard 14, a comprehensive organized, systematized and sustained assessment process with clearly articulated statements of expected student learning outcomes for all programs across the campus, has not fully been developed. This notwithstanding, the Team is convinced that SUNY-New Paltz is on trajectory of success with its assessment initiative for continuous improvement of student learning.

### **Suggestions:**

The Team suggests that SUNY-New Paltz make effective use of assessment results from capstone courses/experiences that provide opportunities for students. These courses allow students to master competencies in General Education, critical knowledge or skills in General Education, and/or their majors for program level assessment instead of using assessment data collected from assessments of courses at different levels. This will reduce complexity of assessment processes for programs and facilitate use of results.