

Saint Joseph's College of Maine

278 Whites Bridge Road

Standish, Maine 04084

December 1, 2013

Progress Report on:

- (1) implementing initiatives of the new strategic plan;
- (2) continuing to develop an integrated academic structure, with clear lines of responsibility, that provides effective oversight of all academic programs however delivered; and
- (3) continuing to develop the governing board, ensuring the expertise and experience needed to fulfill its responsibilities.

Introduction

Saint Joseph's College thanks the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges for the opportunity to provide this update on the three matters of interest identified in the Commission's letter of June 5, 2013.

In that letter, which also continued Saint Joseph's College's accreditation, the Commission asked the College to "submit a report for consideration in Spring 2014 that gives emphasis to the institution's progress in:

1. Implementing the initiatives of the new strategic plan;
2. Continuing to develop an integrated academic structure, with clear lines of responsibility, that provides effective oversight of all academic programs however delivered;
3. Continuing to develop the governing board, ensuring the expertise and experience needed to fulfill its responsibilities."

This progress report focuses tightly on those topics specified in the Commission's letter. A draft of the report was made available for review and comment by the campus community in late fall 2013 and by the members of the Board of Trustees at their December 2013 meeting. It is worth noting that the initial draft of this report was prepared by individuals who joined the College after both the 2011 Self Study and the associated Evaluation Team visit and report. For this reason, the reviews by the College community and Board were especially relevant.

The appendices to this report consist of relevant primary documents generated at the College during the eighteen months following the College's receipt of the Commission's letter.

Institutional Overview

Saint Joseph's College of Maine is a Catholic liberal arts college sponsored by the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas. Instruction at the post-secondary level began in 1912 in Portland, and the institution was chartered as Saint Joseph's College by the State of Maine in 1915. For several years in the early 1950s, the institution operated under the name of Our Lady of Mercy College prior to the relocation of the institution to its current location in Standish, Maine in 1956. At that time, the institution resumed its original name.

In 1970, the College began admitting male students, and in 1976, the Board approved the beginning of a "distance education" program for the College. Graduate degrees have been offered since 1986.

As of the fall of 2013, the College has 954 full-time undergraduate students and 48 part-time undergraduate students enrolled in its campus based program. This enrollment is up approximately 6% from the previous fall. About half of these students are residents of Maine; the remainder come primarily from other New England states, with a very small number coming from outside of New England. There are 1405 individuals enrolled in the College's online programs at the undergraduate level, and another 1726 people enrolled in online graduate programs. Students enrolled in the College's online programs live in 48 states and internationally.

The College ended Fiscal 2012 and Fiscal 2013 with modest operating surpluses achieved through careful spending rather than exceeding the revenue targets for those years. The College's approved budget for Fiscal 2014 is \$48m inclusive of institutional aid and \$37m net of that aid. As of September 30, 2013, the College endowment had a value of \$17m, up approximately \$4m from the end of FY 11 as reported at the time of the Self-Study and Evaluation Team Visit.

As noted in the Visiting Team Report and the Commission letter, at the time of the last accreditation visit and action, the College was beginning a search for a new president. In May of 2012, the Board of Trustees named Dr. James Dlugos the 14th President of Saint Joseph's College, and he joined the College community in early July.

Since Dr. Dlugos's arrival, there have been a number of changes and new initiatives at the College, some of which will be addressed in the body of this report including those related to strategic planning, the organization of the College, and Board development.

Areas of Focus

(1) Progress on Implementing Initiatives of the New Strategic Plan

Recognizing that the 2010-2015 strategic plan had serious shortcomings, including those identified by the Evaluation Team during their visit, the Board of Trustees voted at its December 2012 meeting to ask the College administration to bring forward a proposal for a new strategic planning cycle. At the March 2013 meeting, the Board approved a proposal which called for a 14-month planning process culminating in Board approval of the new plan in May of 2014 (Appendix A).

This planning document, which was shared with the College community, acknowledged some of the challenges that previous strategic planning efforts had generated and included an explicit commitment to improvement in these areas. The "Introduction" to this document indicated that

The recent history of strategic planning and plans at Saint Joseph's College, and its current reputation among College constituencies, leaves room for significant

improvement. This reality is acknowledged only insofar as it informs both the process that the College develops for this crucial institutional activity and the resulting product. For the College to make “significant progress,” however that is defined, the members of the College community must embrace the interconnected concepts of strategic thinking, assessment, planning and budgeting. This need will be reflected in our planning process, the document that emerges, and the institution-wide activity that follows the adoption of the next strategic plan.

The document also identified the following goals for the strategic planning process, as distinct from the goals of the plan, while acknowledging the likelihood that similar themes would appear in both activities.

1. Share the Board-generated Vision Statement for Saint Joseph's College that will frame the institutional strategic planning process and all of its components.
2. Develop a strategic narrative for Saint Joseph's College that articulates what an innovative, responsive, person/learner-centered 21st century Catholic liberal arts institution in the Mercy tradition will look and feel like for students, faculty, staff, trustees, and other members of the College community in 2019.
3. Foster the College community's commitment to “connection making”
4. Re-establish connections with key constituencies
5. Develop a shared vocabulary relative to strategic planning, budgeting, and assessment
6. Foster our commitment to assessment in all facets of the College's activity
7. Align assessment and planning activities
8. Develop our capacity for data-informed decision making.

This Strategic Planning Process document, which is included as Appendix A of this report, included a calendar indicating what activities would take place at each stage of the process and an outline of the elements of the final plan, including the explicit commitment to the articulation of specific and measurable targets for each of the plan's objectives and a multi-year financial model that would contain both annual operating and strategic elements.

Immediately upon the receipt of the Board's approval, a Strategic Planning Steering Committee was announced and began its work. During the spring 2013 session, members of the Steering Committee facilitated 18 listening/visioning sessions on campus that focused on 9 topics. These topics were: (1) Size of the College (enrollment characteristics); (2) College/Campus Community and Culture; (3) Academic/Educational Programs; (4) Facilities and Physical Environment; (5) Saint Joseph's as a place to live and work; (6) Saint Joseph's image/reputation; (7) Revenue sources; (8) Saint Joseph's Relationship to the Region; and (9) Catholic Identity and Mercy Values. These listening/visioning sessions were open to all members of the College

community: faculty, staff, and students. The results were collected and posted on the College web page established for the purpose of involving the community in the strategic planning process. Several of the listening/visioning sessions were video-taped and these were also posted on the Strategic Planning web page. Students and faculty in the College's online programs were invited to participate in the planning activities via the web page. During the Summer 2013 Alumni Weekend, the President met with an invited group of graduates of the College to engage them in the process.

The results of the listening/visioning sessions were analyzed by the Steering Committee during the summer of 2013 and used to produce a draft of the Strategic Narrative which was reviewed by members of the College community during a series of Feedback Sessions conducted during Fall 2013 (Appendix B and Appendix C). These sessions indicated general consent to the major themes and components of the plan, allowing development of additional elements of the plan.

The Institutional Research Office has begun the work of creating a "Fact Book" and Key Performance Indicators for the College; several of the Key Performance Indicators will become Strategic Indicators depending on the specific initiatives and targets that are incorporated in the approved plan. The College is also committed to developing a new Comparison Group of Peer and Aspirant Schools based on the core data elements of enrollment and finances as well as other institutional characteristics.

Also during the fall of 2013, the College's new Vice President and Chief Financial Officer began developing the multi-year financial model that will be part of the Strategic Plan presented for Board approval in May of 2014.

The Strategic Planning Steering Committee anticipates two more rounds of community feedback/response sessions to occur as more elements of the plan are developed and before the final plan is presented for Board consideration. The Board's Planning and Assessment Committee has been regularly reviewing the planning process and results and sharing their observations with the full Board. Individual Board committees will be asked to review elements of the emerging plan relevant to their particular concerns during the spring of 2014 before the plan is finalized.

The current Strategic Planning Process was designed to produce a strategic plan for Saint Joseph's College that will be in compliance with Commission Standards 2.1 through 2.5. The College will be happy to update the Commission on the status of the Strategic Plan after the Board approves the results of the current work in this area.

(2) Progress on continuing to develop an integrated academic structure, with clear lines of responsibility, that provides effective oversight of all academic programs however delivered.

The Evaluation Team noted progress that had been made by the College in response to long-standing Commission concerns about the relationship between the College's two "distinct educational divisions," and the Commission letter noted positively some specific changes that addressed the issue of integration. The Commission went on to say

However, we share the team's judgment that additional efforts are needed for the institution to become one college. In addition, although the team was assured that "all purely academic matters" do fall within the purview of the Vice President of Academic Affairs (VPAA), we note that both the VPAA and the Dean of Graduate and Professional Studies report to the Executive Vice President who has responsibility for the management and marketing of the College's online programs....Consistent with our standards on Organization and Governance and The Academic Program, in the Spring 2014 report, we continue to seek assurance that the College's academic structure is integrated, with clear lines of responsibility, and provides effective oversight of all academic programs however delivered...

These concerns were certainly ones shared by the Board of Trustees and, in fact, were an specific area of emphasis, as was the organizational structure of the College, in the presidential search process that led to the appointment of a new president in July of 2012.

At the time of the last Self-Study, there were nine people, not counting the president, in senior leadership positions at the College. Seven were named vice-presidents and the other two had vice-presidential level authority. This situation continued through to the arrival of Dr. Dlugos in the summer of 2012.

In November of 2012, the President announced a "new organization" for the College, to be implemented in January 2013. The new organization reduced the number of senior leadership/vice-presidential positions to four and re-imagined the way that the vice presidents would work and interact with each other. These new vice presidencies are "institutional" in scope rather than "functional." While each vice president has an area of emphasis (Finance and Administration, Institutional Advancement, Sponsorship and Mission Integration, and Learning), the positions are designed to foster shared responsibility and team work. The new organization also eliminated the position of Executive Vice President and made each of the four remaining vice presidents direct reports to the president.

The "new organization" was introduced at a series of community meetings held in the fall of 2012 with a follow-up email to the entire campus community. (Appendix D and Appendix E). These communications included the following "goals" for the new organization:

- creating a sustainable culture of engagement among all college constituencies;
- creating an environment that encourages creativity, strategic thinking and acting, and accountability in all of its activities;
- empowering good decision making at the appropriate organizational levels (“subsidiarity”); and
- promoting the effective use of the time, talent, and expertise of members of the College community.

The written communication went on to comment on the re-framing of the conventional Chief Academic Officer as a “Chief Learning Officer.”

The most significant change occasioned by the initial implementation of this new organization is the clarification of responsibilities that had formally been bundled in the position of Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the College. The Vice President element had responsibility for institution-wide matters, and the Dean of College part had responsibility for matters relating to the traditional, on-campus academic program. It is not possible for one person to give adequate attention and energy to both areas of concern. In order to more responsibly provide for both, we will separate these functions at the same time as we expand the institutional level scope of the CLO’s activities.

The new Chief Learning Officer will have institution-wide responsibility for ensuring the quality and intellectual integrity of the College’s Learning Community and its operational efficiency through effective administration and direction of its academic/learning resources and activities. The CLO is ultimately responsible for all learning programs offered in any modality (including degree and non-degree programs, co- and extra-curricular programs, and training programs), faculty and staff development programs, assessment and institutional effectiveness, enrollment management, and College’s Learning Commons. The CLO will work with colleagues from both the 4-year program and GPS to identify points of connection and synergies.

At the time of the announcement of the new organization, it was envisioned that below the level of this vice presidency, the College would continue to use the parallel structures of the 4-Year or Traditional Program and GPS, which was renamed the “College Online” at the beginning of 2013 as part of an institutional branding initiative. The Dean of the (Traditional) College and the Dean of the College Online (GPS) would have been organizationally equivalent positions, with comparable responsibilities in their respective areas, and each reporting to the Vice President and Chief Learning Officer.

This realignment of responsibilities for all of the College's educational programs makes explicit the College's compliance with Standard 3.10. Additionally, the Vice President and Chief Learning Officer has responsibility for all assessment activities (student learning outcomes and institutional effectiveness) at Saint Joseph's College. During the spring of 2013, the College conducted a national search for the position of Vice President and Chief Learning Officer which resulted in Dr. Michael Pardales joining the College in July of that year. Dr. Pardales had previously served as Dean of the School of Education and Human Services at Canisius College in Buffalo, NY.

Several changes in personnel that occurred after the implementation of the new organization have influenced the ongoing development of its structure.

Dr. Randall Krieg, who was VPAA prior to January of 2013, became the Dean of the (Traditional) College at that time. Subsequently, Dr. Krieg left Saint Joseph's to become the Provost and Dean of the College at St. John Fisher University in Rochester, NY. And in August of 2013, Lynn Olsen, who had been serving as the Dean of the College Online (GPS) retired from the College.

With both the Dean of the College and the Dean of the College Online positions vacated, the President and the Chief Learning Officer undertook an exploration of the options available for continuing the momentum generated by and achieving the goals of the new organization. In the fall of 2013, the decision was made not to fill the existing and vacant dean positions but, instead, to create two new positions to support the College's educational programs. In the late fall, the College announced searches for the positions of Dean for Undergraduate Studies and Dean for Graduate Studies, parallel positions each reporting to the Vice President and Chief Learning Officer.

The work of integrating the College continues in other areas, both academic and operational, as well. In November 2013, the College hired a new Associate Dean for Nursing who will oversee all of the College's nursing programs both face-to-face and online at the undergraduate and graduate level. In addition, faculty from the traditional, 4-year program and faculty from the online program have begun planning together for new jointly offered and integrated academic programs in areas such as Information Science and Health Care Communications.

On the operational side, in July 2013, the College began a complete website redesign project that will result in the elimination of the need for separate web pages for the traditional college and the online college. The new, unified webpages will be operation on July 1, 2014, a date chosen to have the least impact on the enrollment activities of students in either set of programs.

The unified website is one result of the College's decision to integrate its marketing and communications functions by bringing the online marketing and the campus-based marketing

together under the leadership of an Executive Director of Marketing and Communications who joined the College in August of 2012.

(3) Progress on continuing to develop the governing board, ensuring the expertise and experience needed to fulfill its responsibilities

The College's Board of Trustees has enthusiastically embraced the spirit of the Commission's comments in this area and has spent a significant amount of time and energy in self-reflection and improvement over the past year and a half.

Beginning with its September 2012 meeting, the Board undertook a series of initiatives that have led both to immediate-term improvements in Board operations and functions and to long-term enhancement of the conditions under which the Board will operate.

With the March 2013 meeting, the Board transitioned from paper "board books" for the distribution of materials to an electronic portal. This change resulted in various economies and efficiencies, ranging from not spending approximately \$10,000 a year in board book production costs to the more timely distribution of the most current information in advance of committee and full board meetings.

In addition, the schedule of Board committee meetings has been standardized and consolidated so that all committees have their regular meetings over two days approximately two weeks before the associated full Board meeting. This new meeting structure is intended to bring greater focus to the work of the individual committees as well as creating opportunities for collaboration among the committees. For example, in the past year, the Student Life and Academic Affairs committees have had joint sessions as have the Trustee Committee and the Institutional Advancement Committee.

The amount and nature of the materials distributed to board members in advance of meetings has also been clarified. One result of this process is a renewed commitment to have written reports/minutes of all committee meetings available one week in advance of the full Board meeting. This practice has allowed for the adoption of a "consent/discussion" agenda format for Board meetings. This more efficient use of the time allotted to these meetings has allowed for the creation of the space for a substantial "board development" section for all full Board meetings. At its December 2013 meeting, this section of the agenda was used for an extended consideration and discussion of the Davis Educational Foundation's recent report on the Cost of Higher Education. This topic was clearly important to both the current strategic planning activities as well as to considerations of the upcoming FY 14 annual budget.

While several of the changes described above began at the time the new president joined the College in the summer of 2012, others grew out of the Board Retreat that occurred in March of 2013. This AGB Retreat took place off campus over a day and a half in conjunction with the regularly scheduled Board meeting. Facilitated by Dr. Theodore Long, president emeritus of Elizabethtown College in Pennsylvania, the retreat had 100 percent participation from Board members and resulted in reaffirmation of individual trustees' commitment to the College as well as a series of concrete actions that the Board would engage in to further strength its work (Appendix F).

One of the most apparent of these actions is the current Trustee Committee initiative aimed at bolstering both Board membership numbers as well as capacity through the strategic identification of potential new trustees. This began with the adoption of a "New Trustee Identification/Recruitment Process" (Appendix G) that, among other things, called for the creation a composite profile of member characteristics, skill sets, and attributes. These factors will be used to create a matrix for the purpose of identifying areas of current or future need for the Board.

Current trustees completed the inventory over the summer of 2013 and the Trustee Committee analyzed the results during the fall of 2013 and has begun using the key findings in their exploration and consideration of potential board members. Chief among the immediate needs identified through this exercise are increasing the geographic and ethnic diversity of the board along with an awareness of the average age of trustees. These concerns have been added to those identified in the Commission letter: "fundraising, financial acumen, and/or expertise in turnaround situations."

Trustee Committee members have established a target of adding three or four new trustees for the coming academic year with similar targets anticipated for the next several years as the Board looks to increase its membership and fill a significant number of the approximately two dozen available Board seats. In anticipation of this recruiting effort, the Board is working to establish clear expectations for Board membership and performance, both of which will enhance the Board's ability to provide strong and informed leadership to the College in the years to come.

To further support the work of the Board, in the spring of 2013, the College created the new position of Executive Assistant to the President and Secretary to the Board. The addition of this new position and its immediate results have been positively noted by the Board members and College administrators.

Conclusion

Saint Joseph's College of Maine is pleased to be able to share with our colleagues at the Commission this report on our progress in these three specific areas. We trust that what we have conveyed will provide the Commission with the appropriate assurance that the College continues to be committed to the very highest standards of institutional practice and to continuing creativity and innovation.

The year and a half since our receipt of the Commission's letter has been a time of significant positive change and development at the College, and the sense of optimism noted by the Evaluation Team at the time of their visit has only increased.

We look forward to receiving the Commission's response to this report as well as its determination on our request for general approval to offer distance education programming within the scope of our mission. And we would, of course, be happy to provide any additional information or clarification the Commission might need.

List of Appendices

Appendix A: Strategic Planning Process Document

Appendix B: Strategic Narrative

Appendix C: Campus Participation/Feedback Sessions PowerPoint

Appendix D: "New Organization" PowerPoint

Appendix E: "New Organization" Campus Email

Appendix F: Minutes of March 2013 Board Retreat

Appendix G: New Trustee Identification and Recruitment Process