Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, and Students

of

Saint Joseph's College of Maine
Standish, Maine

by

A Visiting Team representing the
New England Commission of Higher Education

Prepared after study of the institution's
Self-Study evaluation report and a site visit
Date of Evaluation: October 31 – November 3, 2021

The Members of the Team:

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This report represents the views of the evaluation committee as interpreted by the chairperson. Its content is based on the committee's evaluation of the institution with respect to the Commission's criteria for accreditation. It is a confidential document in which all comments are made in good faith. The report is prepared both as an educational service to the institution and to assist the Commission in making a decision about the institution's accreditation status.

New England Commission of Higher Education
Preface Page to the Team Report
Please complete **during the team visit** and include with the report prepared by the visiting team

Date form completed: _11/2/21_

Name of Institution: Saint Joseph's College of Maine

1. **History:** Year chartered or authorized _1915/1912_   Year first degrees awarded _1916_

2. **Type of control:** ☐ State   ☐ City   ☑ Religious Group; specify: _Institute for Sisters_ _of mercy of the_ _Americas_
   ☑ Private, not-for-profit   ☐ Other; specify: _____
   ☐ Proprietary

3. **Degree level:**

   ☒ Associate   ☒ Baccalaureate   ☒ Masters   ☐ Professional   ☐ Doctorate

4. **Enrollment in Degree Programs:** (Use figures from fall semester of most recent year):

	Full-time	Part-time	FTE	Retention[a]	Graduation[b]	# Degrees[c]
Associate	O	12	4.0			3
Baccalaureate	725	240	805.0	67%*	62%*	281
Graduate	117	405	~~252.0~~			209

(a) full-time 1st to 2nd year   (b) 3 or ⑥ year graduation rate   (c) number of degrees awarded most recent year
*-on-campus only
319.5

5. **Student debt:**

	Most Recent Year	One Year Prior	Two Years Prior
Three-year Cohort Default Rate	4.3%	4.8%	3.3%
Three-year Loan Repayment Rate	57.9%	73.3%	

	Associate	Baccalaureate	Graduate
Average % of graduates leaving with debt	O	83%	25%
Average amount of debt for graduates	N/A	$23,046	$12,844

6. **Number of current faculty:**   Full-time _63_   Part-time _100_   FTE _164_

7. **Current fund data for most recently completed fiscal year:** (Specify year: _6/30/21_)
   (Double click in any cell to enter spreadsheet. Enter dollars in millions, e.g., $1,456,200 = $1.456)

Revenues		Expenditures	
Tuition	22,408,552	Instruction	11,178,571
Gov't Appropriations	—	Research	—
Gifts/Grants/Endowment	4,565,331	General	7,199,724
Auxiliary Enterprises	8,268,314	Auxiliary Enterprises	5,026,741
Other	1,186,377	Other	10,017,554
Total	36,428,574	Total	33,422,590

8. **Number of off-campus locations:**
   In-state _0_   Other U.S. _0_   International _0_   Total _0_

9. **Number of degrees and certificates offered electronically:**
   Programs offered entirely on-line _69_   Programs offered 50-99% on-line _0_

10. **Is instruction offered through a contractual relationship?**
    ☑ (No)   ☐ Yes   Specify program(s): _____

INTRODUCTION:

The New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) Visiting Team's visit to Saint Joseph's College of Maine for a comprehensive evaluation was conducted in-person from October 31 – November 3, 2021. The Visiting Team Chair made an in-person Preliminary Visit to Saint Joseph's on May 5, 2021. The Visiting Team received the Saint Joseph's Self-Study document and other relevant materials in advance of its visit; however, upon arriving on campus, the Visiting Team learned that the Self-Study document it had received in advance was not the most current version. In addition, numerous Self-Study- referenced supporting documents and all the appendices were not posted to the Visiting Team's portal in advance, leading to substantial requests for additional materials throughout the on-campus visit. The Saint Joseph's team was responsive and gracious in providing the Visiting Team with its requested, additional materials. The late nature of the Visiting Team's receipt of the final version of Saint Joseph's Self-Study document and the delayed supporting documents added challenge during the visit. Nonetheless, after reviewing the Saint Joseph's Self-Study documents, accompanying and later-provided materials, and information gathered during its visit, the Visiting Team believes it has sufficient information to comprehensively evaluate Saint Joseph's College of Maine according to the *Standards for Accreditation* of the New England Commission of Higher Education.

The Visiting Team's initial meeting with Saint Joseph's College of Maine was an informal reception held on Sunday evening with approximately 15 members of Saint Joseph's Board of Trustees, Senior Leadership, Self-Study Steering Committee, and Faculty Senate. Members of the Saint Joseph's community offered warm introductions and hospitality, and the Visiting Team members thoroughly enjoyed the reception.

During its time on campus, the Visiting Team's meetings included: 6 Trustees; all members of the President's Cabinet individually; nearly all department and program chairs; numerous administrative staff members; and 2 students, one in person and one on-line. Open meetings with faculty and staff brought together approximately 16 people. On campus meetings suggested to the Visiting Team that the process of developing the Self-Study document resided almost solely with its co-chairs, with Saint Joseph's President Dlugos authoring some of the content and other members of the self-study team serving as sources for feedback and clarification. Although the Self-Study development process did not appear to involve the wider college community, the Visiting Team did observe widespread awareness of the purpose and importance of the Self-Study document and the reaccreditation process. Visiting Team members found their interactions and communications with the Saint Joseph's community to be cordial and candid.

The Team Chair's exit report was delivered in-person, with a remote viewing option available to members of the Saint Joseph's community. All Saint Joseph's Trustees, Faculty, and Staff, along with all community members who met with Visiting Team members during on-campus meetings, were invited to attend the exit report readout. Attendance seemed to be high, further supporting the Visiting Team's observation that the entire Saint Joseph's community understood the importance of the reaccreditation process. In the sections that follow, a more detailed summation of the Visiting Team's findings is provided.

STANDARD 1 - MISSION AND PURPOSES:

Saint Joseph's College of Maine, the State's only Catholic college, was founded for women in 1912 by the Portland Regional Community of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas and chartered by the Maine Legislature in 1915. From 1912 until 1956, the College was located in Portland before moving to its current campus in Standish. Saint Joseph's became coeducational in 1970, began offering distance education programs in 1976, and presently offers certificate, undergraduate and graduate programs at its Standish campus and on-line.

Adopted in 1994, Saint Joseph's Mission Statement reads, "*Rooted in and professing fidelity to the teachings of Jesus Christ and the doctrines and heritage of the Roman Catholic Church, Saint Joseph's College, sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy, is a liberal arts college that nurtures intellectual, spiritual, and social growth in students of all ages and all faiths within a value-centered environment.*" The College lists seven Core Values, which were added in 2000: Faith, Excellence, Integrity, Community, Respect, Compassion, and Justice. Mission at Saint Joseph's is informed by its Catholic identity and the values espoused by the Sisters of Mercy, and there is consistency and clarity across the College's communication platforms in articulating mission and its centrality to the College's purpose.

Over the course of the past decade, the chief mission officer role for Saint Joseph's has been filled by three individuals serving at the vice president level, including the current Vice President and Chief Sponsorship and Mission Integration Officer (CSMIO), Dr. Christopher Fuller, who is a member of the President's leadership team. According to the College's Self-Study document, its former strategic plan (2014), *Sustaining the Promise: Toward Saint Joseph's College's Second Hundred Years*, and its 2021 college-wide review and update of that plan, *Sustaining the Promise: 2021-2026*, provide "direction for the Office of Sponsorship and Mission Integration by outlining goals regarding mission integration." The CSMIO office coordinates with college offices and personnel efforts within their respective units to integrate the College's mission into operational and assessment practices.

The College offers its internal community numerous mission integration activities each year, such as its new employee orientation, an end-of-year Community Day, Mission Momentum events, and Mercy Week. External community mission integration efforts include the Center for Faith and Spirituality's events, which bring to the Saint Joseph's campus faith communities from Maine and speakers who address spiritual-based topics. Since his arrival in 2019, Dr. Fuller has initiated numerous mission integration and assessment activities, but these efforts continue to be a work in progress. In 2021, the College published its "Mission Accountability Self-Study and Peer Review" document, in which it seeks to "illustrate how the mission and core values are exhibited throughout the life and structures of the College." In recent years, the CSMIO has administered numerous quantitative and qualitative survey instruments to gather data regarding the extent and effectiveness of Saint Joseph's mission being fully integrated throughout all layers of the College community, but as the Self-Study document acknowledges, these assessment efforts are ongoing and works in progress. While the College's strategic plan provides direction for mission integration efforts, the Self-Study, accompanying materials, and on campus meetings did not provide evidence of the role that mission plays in strategic planning and senior leadership decision-making processes. The Self-Study suggests that mission "influences and shapes decisions at the

leadership level," noting a survey instrument administered in 2020 to leaders across campus; however, a review of the survey's responses revealed a small number of overall respondents with minimal evidence of mission playing a significant role in informing decision-making. The Self-Study also describes the opportunity for growth and refinement with regard to the Saint Joseph's community's understanding and/or its ability to articulate "what we mean by a 'Mercy Education.'" On campus meetings with the CSMIO indicated the broader Saint Joseph's community has much deeper awareness of the College's core values versus its stated mission values. The Self-Study suggests the College has a plan to review its mission statement and core values for affirmation or possible revision processes, assuring they remain relevant and true to the education offered by Saint Joseph's, and meetings with the CSMIO indicate that process will occur in 2022.

Campus meetings revealed a clear rallying point around mission for the Saint Joseph's community has been its Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) initiative. Notably within the past couple years, JEDI has served as a strategic lens and inspiration for Saint Joseph's in seeking greater mission-fulfillment and integration efforts.

STANDARD 2 - PLANNING AND EVALUATION:

Planning and Evaluation are areas of special emphasis for Saint Joseph's College of Maine. In its letter dated February 12, 2021, NECHE asked Saint Joseph's College to demonstrate in its Self-Study document success in the implementation and ongoing evaluation of its strategic plan, in developing reasonable enrollment goals, and in clarifying the role of on-line programming in light of its strategic planning process. The Visiting Team saw emerging evidence to suggest progress in some of these key areas, though challenges remain in the use of systematic, broad-based, and integrated planning and evaluation in support of institutional effectiveness.

The Self-Study includes several examples of effective planning and evaluation, especially at the unit level; these examples include learning and learning assessment, retention, information technology, and pandemic response and preparedness, among others. The Institutional Academic and Learning Assessment Plans are significant bright spots, especially with their focus on student learning and educational effectiveness. Recent progress made in the ongoing implementation of program and institutional learning outcomes shows real promise, especially in the recent move towards ePortfolios. This work will be enhanced by the appointment of a faculty coordinator to support learning assessment efforts across the College (see below and also the narrative for Standard 8).

The Self-Study also describes—and conversations on campus confirm—ongoing refinement of the College's overall strategic plan, *Sustaining the Promise*. This strategic plan was first developed in 2014, with six key strategic goals and seven overarching strategic initiatives. An audit conducted in the 2019-2020 academic year shows progress in several of these key strategic initiatives, even as the College acknowledges areas where progress has been more uneven, especially as related to enrollment.

The past year has seen a modest refresh of the strategic plan at Saint Joseph's, with significant investments of time and resources at the College, and at a time of significant disruption with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. This process was managed by the College's leadership, with significant input and engagement from the Board of Trustees, and opportunities for feedback from faculty and students. The strategic goals and initiatives were modified somewhat based on a new audit of internal and external strengths and opportunities; and the College is currently in the process of developing and setting key performance indicators (KPIs) to monitor progress in the implementation of the strategic plan. Importantly, a new set of comparison institutions is being refined for external benchmarking, and to help guide KPI development. Aside from enrollment however (see below), it is unclear how these KPIs will be set in collaboration with relevant stakeholders across the College; and it remains too early to identify demonstrable success in the implementation of the plan. A key bellwether will be the FY23 enrollment targets that are being set and whether those can be achieved next year, especially after a significant dip in on-campus enrollment this fall.

In spite of the recent volatility in enrollment, there nonetheless seem to be productive conversations at the Board and senior leadership level around enrollment goals, at least for on-campus programs. And the Visiting Team heard evidence of engaged conversations around enrollment in the on-line programs involving the Chief Learning Officer and On-line Program Directors, both individually and collectively. However, it remains unclear how the enrollment targets will be set and incorporated into the broader strategic planning effort. Systematic, integrated, and ongoing long-range enrollment and financial forecasting were not evident, and turnover in the Chief Financial Officer, Chief Enrollment Officer, and Chief Learning Officer positions will make this sort of modeling all the more challenging—but no less important—for the foreseeable future.

Ongoing evaluation efforts and the use of data to monitor progress in its strategic (and other) planning efforts and implementation remain limited. The Self-Study mentions use NSSE and FSSE data to measure student engagement, results of which were shared with faculty, and used in a refresh of faculty advising standards; and recent efforts around student success, retention, and educational effectiveness seem guided at least in part by the collection and analysis of data. However, other examples of using quantitative or qualitative data to inform planning and evaluation were limited; conversations with students likewise revealed few examples where they felt their feedback was being systematically collected and used. This seems at least partly attributable to a lack of a centralized institutional research function at the College, and indeed, conversations on campus confirmed a decentralized and highly uneven use of data on campus, which also was reflected in the Self-Study, where data first forms were often incompletely or inconsistently filled in. The College has recently moved to create a new faculty assessment coordinator role, which will undertake focused work in learning and outcomes assessment. The Visiting Team would strongly encourage ongoing dialogue around—and resourcing of—a coordinated institutional research, evaluation, and assessment framework with a focus on educational effectiveness.

STANDARD 3 - ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNANCE:

Saint Joseph's College of Maine has a mission-oriented governance structure with a Board of Trustees. Per the amended Bylaws in October 2020 and amended covenant in February 2021, the formal decision-making association with the Sisters of Mercy was eliminated. As a Mercy college, Saint Joseph's is still sponsored by the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas and affiliated with the Conference for Mercy Higher Education (CMHE). The faculty internal governance is strong with each faculty member a voting representative. Administrative positions at the VP level, lines of authority, and responsibilities are clearly defined in the Trustees' Bylaws, faculty handbook, and employee handbook. The Trustees' Bylaws clearly define the roles and responsibilities for the Board of Trustees.

Governing Board
Saint Joseph's College of Maine is governed by a Board of Trustees. The Board is required to have a minimum of 18 Trustees and no more than 36. Campus meetings revealed the 2021number of Trustees is 25. The Board is divided into 7 committees: Strategic Directions, Mission, Finance, Audit and Risk Management, Student Life and Learning, College Environments, and Mission-Aligned Business. All new Trustees are required to be a member of the mission committee to fully understand, live, and apply the mission. Every Board of Trustees meeting begins with education about the mission ("mission integration") such as the recent presentation by a priest from Boston College. Members are also asked to reflect how each Board meeting reflects the mission and core values.

Since the last 10-year review, the Board re-aligned and now conducts annual Trustee engagement surveys. A review of the survey and Board minutes show they use the results to improve Board practices and processes, including Board recruitment. New members are recruited based on mission and diversity—"Do they live the Mercy mission?" All Trustees complete the AGB on-line Board orientation workshop. Board members meeting with the Visiting Team revealed they were very engaged with the institution and clearly described the responsibilities and relationships of the Board of Trustees. The president reports to the Board of Trustees and the relationship between the Board and President appears to be effective.

Board members report that the 2014 strategic plan was aspirational, but the new 2021-2026 Refreshed Strategic Plan is more directional and realistic. Board minutes and discussions revealed that the Board is setting the key performance indicators (KPIs) for the plan and are intimately involved in the annual review and implementation of the strategic plan. The Self-Study outlined and the Board of Trustees members confirmed the goals of the Board.

The Board regularly reviews the performance of the President. A sub-committee of the Board annually conducts a 360 evaluation of the President at the end of each academic year. The evaluation includes an appraisal and setting goals for the next year.

Internal Governance
The Trustees' Bylaws define the President as the chief executive officer of the College and list the key vice presidents: Vice President & Chief Learning Officer (VPCLO); Vice President & Chief Sponsorship and Mission Integration Officer (VPCSMO); Vice President & Chief Financial

Officer (VPCFO); and Vice President & Chief Advancement Officer (VPCAO). Several of the vice president positions have had significant turnover in recent years (i.e. 3 CFOs (including 1 interim) in 5 years and 2 CLOs (including 1 interim) in 5 years). In addition, Saint Joseph's has interim personnel and open searches for VP/chief of students, learning, finance, and enrollment positions. It is clear from on-campus discussions that the unstable leadership has created extensive challenges and changes, but there is "more confidence in current leadership" and people are "cautiously optimistic" in the future of the College.

The Faculty Senate is defined by a constitution in the Faculty Handbook. All full-time faculty (ordinary and non-ordinary; see Standard 6) are members of the Faculty Senate. Three seats are reserved for part-time faculty (one must be from the on-line programs faculty), but are vacant as of this report. An Executive Committee consisting of President, Vice President, Recording Secretary, and Corresponding Secretary constitute the officers. The Executive Committee is elected from the faculty at large. Recommendations of the Faculty Senate are sent to the Chief Learning Officer (CLO) for action. When necessary, recommendations are referred to the President and/or the Board of Trustees for action.

There are six standing committees of the Faculty Senate. Faculty members serve on each of these committees:
- The 4-Year College Educational Policies Committee makes recommendations to the Faculty Senate concerning college undergraduate curricula and academic policy for the 4-Year College.
- The On-line Educational Policies Committee makes recommendations to the Faculty Senate concerning undergraduate and graduate curricula and academic policy for the College's on-line programs.
    - Two (one for on campus and one for on-line) Educational Policy Committees review program revisions and assessments.
- The Rank and Tenure Committee reviews and evaluates applications for promotion and/or tenure as well as giving feedback to faculty during their third year at the College.
- The Faculty Development Committee develops guidelines and implements policies, procedures and programs that enhance professional and instructional development of the faculty and recommends institutional changes and improvements necessary to accomplish these goals.
- The Library Committee, which is an advisory committee to the Senior Director of the Learning Commons, reports to the Faculty Senate concerning library policies.
- The Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate works closely with the Vice President and Chief Learning Officer and decisions made on programs/initiatives are communicated to faculty.

The Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate meets at least once a year with the Board of Trustees Student Life and Learning Committee, allowing for direct, formal communication between faculty and Board members. Discussion with the Board and minutes from the Faculty Senate meetings indicate faculty want more communication with the Board. The Faculty Senate passed the following resolution in September 2021: "The Executive Committee shall meet at least three times annually with the Student Life and Learning Committee of the Board of Trustees."

Two faculty members also serve on each of the All-College Committees which brings their voice into the larger institution-wide decisions making process.

A survey reported in the Self-Study showed that 71% of full-time faculty indicated they feel confident in voicing their opinion at a Senate meeting, and 67% as believing that the Faculty Senate represents their interests. Faculty report that a recent downsizing of programs (and faculty) were initiated by the President and the leadership team. However, the Faculty Senate and the appropriate committee were given an opportunity for feedback. Involuntary separation is defined in the employee handbook and termination of faculty appointments are defined in chapter 7 of the faculty handbook. Based on campus meetings and with no formal institutional research person/office on campus, it is unclear to the Visiting Team what criteria was used for these decisions.

Up until 2018, staff and the broader campus community did not have a formal role in shared governance. "Toward the Common Good" ("An Institutional Governance Model for Saint Joseph's College") was implemented in 2018 to clarify shared governance for institutional decision-making. As a result, the All-College Governance Committees were formed in 2018 to engage all constituencies on campus. There are five committees with membership from the communities whose scope generally aligns with one of the Board committees. The Executive Summary of "Toward the Common Good" defines the committees and their connection to the Strategic Plan: Strategic Directions, Mission, Budget and Finance, Institutional Effectiveness, and College Environments. Each committee is governed by a charter that outlines the vision, mission, and primary committee responsibilities along with the alignment with the NECHE accreditation standards. For example, the Institutional Effectiveness Committee aligns with 3.2, 3.8, 3.13, 3.19, and 8. Faculty, staff, and students serve as members and co-chairs. A student is a co-chair on the College Environments Committee this year. The All-College Committees meet on a regular basis and information is disseminated to stakeholders at the College. Some of the decisions are communicated to faculty at Faculty Senate meetings. The Institutional Effectiveness Committee executed a review and assessment of the All-College Committee system in spring 2021 and the results have been submitted to the campus leadership for action.

Staff governance is described in the handbooks and policies. Prior to the adoption of the governance model described in "Toward the Common Good" and the implementation of the All-College Committee system at the beginning of the 2018-19 academic year, staff members had no formal role in the College's governance structure.

Students are represented by a student government as defined by a Student Government Constitution. Students also have 2 seats on the All-College Committees and meet with the Student Life and Learning Committee of the Board at least once a year.

STANDARD 4 - THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM:

Introduction
As noted in the Self-Study, Saint Joseph's College of Maine currently offers an extensive set of collegiate-level programs in recognized fields of study: 34 on-campus undergraduate programs,

16 on-line undergraduate programs, 6 on-line masters programs, and 13 on-line graduate certificate programs. In addition, according to the list of Campus Undergraduate Programs on the College website, three of the undergraduate majors include concentration options (ex. Forensic Psychology concentration in Criminal Justice major), and another 3 include options for specific career path tracks (ex. Pre-Physical Therapy track in Exercise Science major). In on-campus interviews and follow-up documentation provided in the digital workroom, it was discovered that 12 undergraduate major programs and 14 minor programs have been "sunsetted" recently: some are currently being taught out, while others are closed to new majors effective this academic year.

As outlined on the Standard 4 Degree-Seeking Enrollment data first form, total enrollment of 1,775 students (full-time and part-time) as of the unspecified census date (presumably Fall 2020) was just slightly greater in distance education (918 students, 51.7%) than on-campus (857 students, 48.29%). However, the distance education student body was primarily part-time; on-campus students made up the majority of full-time (853 students, 89.5%). In the census year, current undergraduate enrollment was greatest in the BS Nursing program (189 students), followed by BS Health Administration (64 students). Likewise, current graduate enrollment was greatest in the MS Nursing program (150 students across four MSN focus areas: Nursing Education, Nursing Administration, AGACNP, and Primary Care FNP).

The learning goals and requirements for all undergraduate programs and all graduate programs are published on the College website, on an individual webpage for each program. A scan of the 17 program review documents provided on-site and in the digital workroom appears to suggest that programs generally have coherent design, breadth, depth, continuity, sequential progression, and synthesis. However, because access to these materials (as well as the Self-Study appendices) was not provided digitally until Thursday prior to the site visit, a thorough review was not possible within the designated timeframe.

According to the NECHE Bridge Report, the July 2021 appointments of the Interim Chief Learning Officer and the new role of Assessment Coordinator are intended to work toward quality standards and reasonable consistency in quality among multiple programs ("ensuring that all academic programs are contributing to the goals of mission, market and margin" and "focus efforts on assessing various elements of the academic programs," respectively).

Community-based learning is briefly noted and appraised in the Standard 4 Self-Study narrative (more so in Standard 8), and it is worth drawing more attention to this practice. As outlined in the Self-Study, 342-559 students have participated per semester from 2016-2020. According to the community-based learning website link provided in the Self-Study, 64% of students at Saint Joseph's College of Maine are engaged in community-based learning. This is a mission-aligned, high-impact practice that is noteworthy at this institution. Indeed, as highlighted on the website, the College was awarded Community Engagement Classification from the Carnegie Foundation in 2015.

Assuring Academic Quality
According to the Self-Study, oversight of academic programs is "through the interdependent efforts of the Vice President and Chief Learning Officer (VPCLO), academic departments, institutional academic committees and the Faculty Senate." According to Appendix 3.4, Faculty

Handbook, 2019-2020, the VPCLO is "responsible for ensuring the quality and intellectual integrity of the College's Learning Community through effective leadership and administration of its academic and learning resources and activities" (page 20). On-campus interviews confirmed that the VPCLO meets regularly with the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, serves ex officio on the Educational Policies Committees and Educational Standards Committees (along with one academic staff member per committee), and is now tasked in this interim year with figuring out institutional and academic structures, systems, and processes. In addition, there are 26 direct reports to the VPCLO, including all program chairs and on-line program directors. There is a monthly chairs meeting with the VPCLO that is evidently now more action-oriented than informational, as it had been in previous iterations; there is now a focus on piloting new ideas, strategy, and implementation.

The Self-Study asserts that "All academic programs in the on-line division use their program reviews to complete regular periodic review of program effectiveness (Appendix 4.4)," outlining that this happens "every three to five years or as substantial changes are made, and an annual update to the review is also completed." There is also reference to a former "discontinued Annual Review Template." Interviews with department chairs and on-line program directors made clear that there is no schedule for regular periodic review of program effectiveness. Although the on-line program review process was apparently more systematic for a period of approximately five years during this ten-year accreditation interval, the Visiting Team learned that program reviews have not been requested from the Office of Academic Affairs on a regular basis. The sample program reviews provided in the digital workroom are all dated 2021 or 2020 – and were, according to interviews, all completed specifically for the NECHE Self-Study. There are individual programs that cite regular annual reviews (Appendix 4.5 Annual Program Reviews: On-line & Graduate Business Programs), but this does not appear to be the norm.

Since program reviews were not provided to the Visiting Team until Thursday prior to the site visit, it was difficult to fully assess their breadth and quality. The sample 2021 program review provided in Appendix 4.4 is for the on-campus undergraduate Department of Theology, and it includes nine sections: program intention; recent changes in the program; program curriculum; faculty; students; instructional policies, strategies, and practices; learning experiences; assessment of student learning outcomes; and future plans. In this program review, student success is assessed via three assessment metrics: e-portfolios, senior capstone course, and alumni data. An external perspective is incorporated to some extent in the discussion of future plans, in which geographic data, demographic data, and the pandemic are cited as challenges impacting future plans. The Visiting Team inquired in the on-campus interview with program chairs and on-line program directors how external perspectives are incorporated in program reviews and learned of only a select few additional examples such as competitor analysis in the on-line Business program and audits in the on-campus Business program.

In Appendix 3.1, academic planning is embedded in the 2014 strategic plan, *Sustaining the Promise: Toward Saint Joseph's College Second Hundred Years*. The fourth of seven initiatives, *Delivering a 21st Century Educational Program*, outlines this intent to "rebuild our undergraduate program and establish a framework for sustainable program growth at all degree levels and in both the credit and other-than-credit-spheres" (page 10). In the refreshed strategic plan, *Sustaining the Promise: 2021-2026*, four "significant accomplishments" are noted toward this end: approval of

new student learning outcomes; new 120-credit major framework; new Leadership in Sustainable Communities major; and introduction of non-degree short courses/certificates, (page 2). For the upcoming five years, the academic initiative in the refreshed strategic plan is now called *Developing a 21st Century Educational Program*. It outlines the same intent as that stated in 2014 but is now paired with five specific objectives.

Based on the evidence provided, it is not yet apparent that academic evaluation is integrated extensively with academic planning in practice. However, in Appendix 2.2, 2018 Institutional Academic Plan, there is evidence of an intent to do so. The Planning and Assessment section (beginning on page 4) outlines nine topics toward this end, specifically citing continuous improvement philosophy and practice in relation to the strategic plan academic initiative.

In the letter from NECHE dated February 12, 2021, Saint Joseph's College of Maine was asked to "give emphasis in the Fall 2021 Self-Study to its success in" four focus areas, including "clarifying the future role of the College's on-line programs in light of its strategic plan goals". While the Standard 4 Self-Study narrative provides an overview of undergraduate and graduate on-line programs and an appraisal of assessment of student learning, there is no discussion of the future of on-line programs in this section aside from projecting that "In 2022-2023, most on-line courses will move to a ten-week format with five terms per academic year. This allows for a more consistent approach to offering programs and seeks to improve the on-line learning experience." (page 44) In the refreshed strategic plan, *Sustaining the Promise: 2021-2026*, there are two objectives that outline future intentions for enrollment and range of on-line programs:

> 1.3 Consistently achieve at least 6600 course enrollments annually in on-line undergraduate and graduate programs.
> 5.3 The College offers a range of on-line undergraduate programs that advances diversity and promotes justice for students at all stages in their degree pursuit.

Given that the data first forms outline head counts and credit hours generated, rather than annual course enrollment data, the Visiting Team was unable to determine current progress toward this goal.

The catalog posted on the College website does not appear to address arrangements for program elimination, but it does address changes in requirements. The catalog policy for change in curricular requirements outlines that "The College reserves the right to change the course and credit hour requirements of any or all academic programs when such modifications are deemed necessary. All students must comply with the new requirements insofar as such modifications pertain to courses and/or credit hours yet to be completed." In on-campus interviews, it was confirmed that programs eliminated in 2020 are being taught out – and as might be expected, the recent program eliminations have been in tandem with faculty reductions. It was noted that in some instances the teaching out has been in limited and less than ideal ways; the primary concern voiced is that it has resulted in the remaining students being taught in the major by a minimal number of faculty (sometimes only one), and not necessarily in their primary disciplinary expertise. However, the Visiting Team did also hear of an instance in which a chair and an administrator thoughtfully worked out a teach-out model to prioritize students taking major courses in the one year left for a departing faculty member, thereby putting a plan in place for students to graduate with major classes as promised.

The on-line catalog policy for writing skills outlines a writing placement process by which on-line undergraduate students are assessed for grammar, usage, mechanics, and effectiveness of expression; reading comprehension; and writing. The on-campus catalog policy for good academic standing and satisfactory progress outlines initially scaffolded expectations for successful student learning: a first-year GPA of 1.75 or higher, then a GPA of 2.0 or higher.

Undergraduate Degree Programs

In addition to fulfilling major program requirements, all students are required to complete the Core Curriculum. Students are expected to demonstrate their completion of institutional learning outcomes and major program competencies in e-portfolios. For example, in Appendix 4.22 of the Self-Study, the Social Work Programs e-Portfolio guide provides a student-centered rationale and thorough set of instructions, including a portfolio check sheet organized by course number and aligned with the program competencies.

General Education

The College's general education program, a four-category Core Curriculum that went into effect in 2014 (per faculty) or 2017 (per the website), is aligned with the College's mission and four of the College's Institutional Learning Outcomes. The thematic approach appears to provide a coherent and substantive framework for broad learning across disciplines. The four learning themes in the College's Core Curriculum include the areas of adequate breadth specified by the Commission: Foundations for College Thinking (including mathematics); The Human Condition and the Human Story (humanities); Nature and Society (sciences, social sciences); Art, Creativity, and Self-knowledge (arts). The Core Curriculum is comprised of 12 four-credit courses for on-campus programs and 14 three-credit courses for on-line programs, thereby meeting the Commission's expectation of at least 40 credits in the general education program. According to the Self-Study, there are five common core curriculum courses for all on-campus students. Based on sample Faculty Senate Minutes added to the digital workroom, there is evidence that the 4 Year EPC and the On-line EPC report out at Faculty Senate meetings and require Faculty Senate votes for course proposals that affect core offerings

The Major or Concentration

In the 2018 Institutional Academic Plan, the New Program Request Form (page 23) shows that measurable program outcomes are expected to be aligned with both institutional learning outcomes and course outcomes at the time of proposal. Looking at major requirements on the undergraduate degree program webpages, it is apparent that the major curricula span from the 100-level to the 300- or 400-level, thereby situating students to move from introductory learning to in-depth mastery at the undergraduate level. Looking at the representative sample of program outcomes provided in the digital workroom and the on-site workroom, there are a range of specificity and approach based on discipline.

Graduate Degree Programs

Five of the masters' degree programs at Saint Joseph's College of Maine are in professional areas (Accountancy, Business, Health Administration, Nursing, Education), and one is in a complex field of study (Theology). According to the Self-Study narrative (page 39), graduate programs range in scope between 30 and 42 credit hours. According to the Standard 4 Headcount by

Graduate Major data first form, though, graduate programs range in scope between 30 and 90 credit hours.

Comparing learning outcomes and curricula for like programs at the undergraduate and graduate level (ex. BS in Health Administration versus Master of Health Administration), it appears that expectations at the graduate level exceed those at the undergraduate level in the same field.

According to the Standard 6 data sheet outlining faculty by highest degree, 49 faculty at the College in FY 2021 have earned doctorates, including all 9 faculty at full Professor rank. (By comparison, 25 have earned master's degrees.) However, it is not apparent how many of these faculty are teaching in the on-line graduate programs. The Standard 6 data sheet outlining faculty by category and rank indicates that there are 125 adjunct faculty total, and the Standard 6 table outlining Number of Faculty by Department indicates that there are currently more part-time faculty than full-time faculty teaching in all the on-line graduate programs: 15:1 for On-line Education, 8:1 for On-line Graduate Health Administration, 16:0 for On-line Graduate MBA/MACC, 11:0 for On-line Pastoral Theology, and 8:2 for On-line MSN (Self-Study, page 100). Evidence has not been provided systematically to confirm that these part-time faculty have appropriate credentials and experience for teaching at the graduate level, though sample program reviews provide some evidence; for example, as outlined in the On-line Health Administration Program Review, the Master of Health program is staffed with one director and 12 full-time faculty with advanced degrees: 5 doctoral and 7 masters. Interviews with on-line program directors regarding the time commitment and scholarship expectations of part-time faculty made clear that they are hired solely to teach, with required completion of pedagogy-related workshops. Anecdotally, it was also noted that at least one on-line program director views the adjunct faculty as a strength of one of the professional graduate programs.

The admission requirements for each of the graduate programs are outlined in the catalog webpage for each individual program. In the catalog, the Graduate Program Policies and Procedures section includes policies on GPA requirements, academic probation, and matriculation limit. Furthermore, some of the graduate programs have specific academic requirements during advanced study (ex. Master of Science in Nursing, which requires a grade of B for all graduate level nursing courses).

The graduate programs at Saint Joseph's College of Maine can be characterized as professional or practice-oriented programs at the master's degree level. As summarized on the College website, the on-line graduate programs' degree requirements appear to take into account program purposes – namely, specialized training. The Self-Study narrative did not address the graduate programs at much length, nor was much evidence provided in relation to assessment of the graduate programs in Standard 4. Therefore, it is not possible to fully appraise all the sub-standards related to graduate degree programs.

Transfer Credit
Based on on-campus interviews, when awarding transfer credit, the Registrar's Office aims to ensure appropriate levels of academic quality by primarily limiting transfer courses to those from regionally accredited systems for on-campus students and accredited systems for on-line students. Transfer credit is awarded on a course-by-course basis, and on a limited basis at the graduate level. Course descriptions, and sometimes syllabi, are reviewed by the Registrar's Office and run by

program chairs. To ensure learning outcomes for programs, it was noted in an on-campus interview that it is helpful that some other schools are starting to put learning outcomes in their course descriptions.

According to the Undergraduate Programs web page, there are transfer agreements for Biology with Secondary Education, Business Administration, Criminal Justice, and Marine Science.

Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit
According to the Standard 4 Headcount by Undergraduate Major data first form, all eight Associate degree programs are 66 credits. All Baccalaureate degree programs are listed in the same form at 128 credits, though the Self-Study narrative (page 29) and on-campus interviews indicated that this is in transition to a range of 120-124 credits as of spring 2020. Based on review of a sampling of curricular requirements, programs appear to have appropriate naming, length, content, and level.

In an on-campus interview, we discovered that offering schedules for courses are not published in the catalog. Indeed, in the Courses section of the catalog on the website, only course numbers, names, and descriptions are provided. Apparently, the course schedules are made available to students by the Registrar's Office in Campus Cafe up to six months in advance of a semester or term. While this advance posting for each semester or term is helpful, the lack of published anticipated offering schedules is of concern, as it could impact students' ability to plan their registration sequences and graduate within anticipated program lengths.

According to on-campus interviews, the Executive Policies Committee (EPC) approves new course proposals, on which credits are required to be listed. Faculty are informed about the credit hour policy by it being published in the College catalog. In an on-campus interview, it was also noted that new faculty are informed at new faculty orientation before the start of the academic year. The catalog policy for the credit hour cites federal regulation, clearly and quantitatively defining credit hour standards and equivalencies. This policy addresses the amount of instructional time assigned and homework typically expected of a student, setting expectations for student learning and workload. It provides appropriate and sufficient detail for on-campus / in-person courses, but it does not specifically address equivalencies for on-line delivery formats. The catalog policy for attendance indicates that "Students are expected to be present at all their regularly scheduled classes." Based on the fall 2021 Master Course Schedule (provided in hard copy during the site visit), it appears that classroom courses meet for the prescribed number of hours. Four-credit courses meet for 1 hour 45 minutes twice a week, or 3 hours 30 minutes once a week.

The catalog policy for quality points relies on both evaluation and credit, "multiplying the point value of the grade earned by the number of semester hours of credit." According to the Self-Study, an internal 2020 qualitative self-assessment survey indicated that 75.9% of faculty "feel that there is integrity in the manner in which the College awards credits" (and 7.4% did not). No sample syllabi were included in the digital workroom until the final day of the site visit, upon request by the Visiting Team. Although the 14 syllabi provided at that point cannot necessarily be considered a "robust, diverse and representative sample of syllabi" as specified for evaluators to review, these sample syllabi do demonstrate academic content and graded assignments for which credit is awarded, as well as suggest appropriate scope for four-credit on-campus courses and three-credit on-line courses. Additionally, a number of these sample syllabi included assignment descriptions

and/or rubrics. Please note that no sample syllabi were provided for internships, independent study, experiential learning, or service learning. Based on these 14 sample syllabi provided, syllabi do not include or reference the credit hour policy.

In an on-campus interview, it was noted that the College worked with CAEL (Council for Adult and Experiential Learning) in the past to award prior experiential credit for on-line adult learners, but it is not awarding prior experiential credit currently.

The [catalog policy for transfer students](#) outlines that at least 32 semester hours must be earned at the College. Given that undergraduate degree programs range from 120 to 124 credit hours, this constitutes at least one-fourth of undergraduate credits. However, it is not apparent in the catalog policy that there is a specification for these non-transferred credits to include advanced major work, and we learned on-site that indeed there is not. Although there was once a residency requirement for a final number of credits in the past, which would ostensibly include advanced major work, there has not been such a requirement for approximately 15 years.

No evidence was provided with regard to evaluation of effectiveness of articulation agreements.

In an on-campus interview, it was noted that there is a general policy that students can return within one year if they don't withdraw and don't attend elsewhere in the interim; if it has been more than one year, or if they attend elsewhere, they are required to re-apply and submit transcripts. Although it was noted that this is understood between academics and admissions, campus constituents were unable to point the Visiting Team to where these specific requirements are published for all students. The [College catalog](#) does outline policies for program transfer, program reinstatement, withdrawals, and leave of absence, and the [On-line Student Handbook](#) added to the digital workroom outlines the same for on-line students.

Undergraduate degrees require a range from 120-124 credits total, and all undergraduate degrees require completion of the Core Curriculum in addition to the major. Requirements are clearly listed in the catalog listings for programs on the College website.

In an on-campus interview, it was discovered that technological programs are employed to ensure academic integrity of grades (via Respondus Lockdown) and to detect plagiarism (via Turnitin). Furthermore, an academic integrity/honesty policy appears to be included in sample syllabi and links to the extensive [academic honesty policy](#) in the College catalog. This policy is also outlined in the [On-line Student Handbook](#).

In on-campus interviews, it was self-assessed that on-line students achieve the equivalent of on-campus students. It was noted that a lot of instructors are dual instructors (teaching both on-line and on-campus), and that the expectation is the same. Anecdotally, if anything, feedback from on-campus students who take on-line courses is that the amount of reading and writing in on-line courses is more intense than on-campus. On-line support specialists regularly see on-line courses live mid-course.

According to the Self-Study, "By 2023, all on-campus undergraduate college students will have completed an ePortfolio, demonstrating their completion of the Institutional Learning Outcomes.

A similar plan is in development for the on-line programs and is expected to be completed by 2024," (page 33). Therefore, data is anticipated within three years that will demonstrate whether on-line courses are consistent with the institution's educational objectives.

In on-campus interviews, sufficient opportunities for students to interact with faculty were mentioned: academic advising, informal community celebrations, an expectation for faculty to hold office hours, and a "robust student support system" for all students. Anecdotally, one campus constituent described access to faculty for on-campus students as excellent, noting "I've never seen it better anywhere else." On-line students are provided with faculty email addresses on the homepages of course sites (which are set up consistently so that students can find instructor info), introduced to faculty in instructor portfolios, and referred to faculty by their on-line support staff as needed. On-line students can interact with faculty via discussion forums, the "Ask the instructor" feature in Brightspace (LMS), and direct outreach.

To ensure valid on-line student identification, procedures include login, password, and IT two-factor identification. Furthermore, Respondus Lockdown proctoring is used for on-line nursing testing validation.

According to the Standard 4 Headcount by Undergraduate Major data first form, undergraduate certificates are primarily 18 credits (in five of the seven certificate programs), but as low as 6 credits (Catholic Catechesis). According to the Standard 4 Headcount by Graduate Major data first form, graduate certificates range from 6-30 credits. Evidence did not appear to be provided to ensure the coherence and level of academic quality for certificates at Saint Joseph's College of Maine are consistent with its degree programs.

STANDARD 5 - STUDENTS:

Students
St Joseph's College of Maine has students enrolled in both in-person and on-line programs for undergraduate and graduate programs. Currently, the total undergraduate fulltime head count stands at 728, and the graduate program at 121. Fall 2021 enrollment numbers reveal a continued decline in overall enrollments that has been occurring in recent years. Looking forward, campus interviews indicated that early fall 2022 undergraduate applications are up significantly versus fall 2021 at the same date, standing at 381 compared to 210. Through its mission and core values, Saint Joseph's embraces practices that promote JEDI values, yet student diversity, notably racial and ethnic, is lagging on campus; it is notable that a majority of higher education institutions in Maine also lag in student diversity. However, with the Talbot scholarship program focused on minority students and a dedicated officer for JEDI, the likelihood of increasing minority representation on campus has promise.

New interim leadership in Undergraduate Admissions is putting in place new strategic initiatives designed to grow applications and enrollments, including: earlier acceptance of Common Applications; a scholarship program (Talbot scholarship) for minority students; outreach to leaders of Maine's immigrant community; and new recruitment initiatives for international students. From campus interviews, a number of new student recruitment strategies that will soon fall into place,

including: Parent Strategy—involving parents at the pre-admission stage; and school visits outside of Maine, especially to the Philadelphia area which has a robust Catholic population; promoting the use of residence halls especially in the summer and other "off times," for not only generating new revenue streams but also for orienting potential students to Saint Joseph's College; and capitalize on the College's proximity to the city of Portland, by issuing restaurant vouchers to potential students and their parents to use in Portland, helping to play down Saint Joseph's rural location.

Based on its current enrollment totals, the institution's new strategic initiative to enroll 1,000 students appears to still be very ambitious, notably in light of current enrollment decline trends and the demographic situation Saint Joseph's faces being located in rural Maine. However, the previously mentioned new admissions and recruitment initiatives offer promise for progress in helping grow the College's enrollment. The strategic initiatives also provide opportunities to grow the graduate fulltime headcount which now stands at 121.

The institution's admissions policy is publicly shared on its website. Saint Joseph's College, in its Self-Study report, says it considers those who have challenged themselves academically, who are committed to learning through involvement, who participate in community activities, and are confident in their ability to succeed. On-line program admission is on a rolling basis, except in the Nursing program. In 2017-18 a standardized test-optional admission practice was adopted, but excluded the Nursing program; on-campus meetings indicated that the Nursing program's decision to not eliminate standardized testing as an admissions requirement resulted in considerable enrollment loss for the fall 2021 semester. The Nursing program is now implementing a test-optional admissions process.

After admission into an on-line program, students are assigned to student support specialists who establish a one-on-one relationship with the students all through their time at Saint Joseph's College. The student support staff help students with navigating through course registration, program requirements and administrative policies. From campus interviews, training is provided to student academic support staff members in communication and listening skills.

Saint Joseph's College monitors retention for on-campus students regularly. The Withdrawal Questionnaire provides information on students who leave prior to earning their degrees. Data collected from fall of 2016 to fall of 2020, indicate the reasons for withdrawal as: a lack of academic challenge; needed courses were not available; and quality of instruction not meeting expectations. However, campus interviews suggested that most recently, students leaving Saint Joseph's were doing so because of a desire to attend larger institutions and/or move closer to home because of stringent COVID-19 protocols on campus.

The average 5-year retention rate for first year students stands at 79% (from 76% between 2002 and 2010); the average 4-year graduation rate is at 52%; the average 5-year graduation rate is at 57%; and the 6-year graduation rate is at 59%. When compared to national averages and to aspirant institutions Saint Joseph's College has persistence and graduation rates that are relatively higher.

Course programs run in two formats: four, 12-week term per year; and five, 10-week term per year which provides students with options. Adult students with family commitments and who work fulltime are given flexibility in degree completion to enable them to not drop out, but to stop out and continue later.

In the on-line experience, a Task Force determined that retention would be enhanced by defining "success" based on the following categories: a) degree completion; b) certification completion; or c) first-course completion.

An Assistant Director of On-line Campus Student Success and Engagement was hired in 2019, with the responsibility of implementing much of the strategy for retention. However, due to staff turnover and restructuring within the department much work has not been done within that Plan. With the newly created positions of Assessment Coordinator and Associate Dean for Academic Initiatives, there is renewed hope for resumption of the work on academic success.

In June, the College provides two 2-day on-campus orientation programs for on-campus incoming students (including transfer students) and their parents and close family members.   The orientation programs provide opportunity to learn about all aspects of campus life. Students interact with their faculty advisors, register for fall semester classes, and talk with other students about college life. For on-line students, orientation is provided by the on-line student support team. Students attend virtually, but the orientation sessions are recorded and made available to students who are unable to attend.

Saint Joseph's College participates in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) to gain insights into the attitudes of incoming students compared to students at similar institutions. The College has administered the NSSE in 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2020 to students at the end of their freshmen year and to graduating seniors.

The Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) provides support to students with disability. The Information Technology (IT) personnel assist students with technology needs through a campus-wide helpdesk that is staffed after-hours. In the on-line programs, the on-line academic tutoring service SMARTTHINKING© provides tutoring for students in a variety of subjects. Through this third-party entity student can interact with a tutor, submit their writing in any class to the on-line writing lab, and submit questions and receive replies from a tutor.

Student Services and Co-Curricular Experiences
Beginning in 2016, Saint Joseph's College now conducts a 5-year self-study on departmental operations, policies and resources to help guide the work of student affairs. Department directors identify a common mission statement that aligns with the mission of student affairs that reads: "Campus Life supports students' holistic personal development, learning, and empowerment in service to a global community."

Through the Student Engagement office and the Campus Activities Board co-curricular experiences are encouraged, in alignment with the mission and purposes of the College. Through the Mercy Center the Student Liturgical Life and Leadership Activities foster student service learning in the larger community in the areas of social justice and interfaith activities. From on-

campus interviews, a dedicated campus priest (who recently resigned) provided liturgical and sacramental support to Catholic students, who also have opportunities to serve as lectors, altar servers, musicians, and Eucharistic Ministers. However, priestly and sacramental duties are now provided by local priests who are paid an honorarium for their services. While this arrangement will continue, moving forward a fulltime individual will be hired as a replacement, with emphasis on social justice. Students also participate in the AmeriCorps program, the Community Service Leaders program and the Federal Work Study Program, which are reviewed periodically.

In 2014, an executive Board position of Commuter Representative, who advocates for the needs and interests of commuter students, was created by Student Government. In 2019, the College expanded commuter student parking permits to include permission to park anywhere on college property that faculty and staff members can park. From campus interviews, plans to further integrate commuter students into campus life include establishing a Commuter Kitchen for snacks and food (interviews suggested over 30% of the College's commuters are said to have low or very low food security) and a Rest Pod for students to spend time between classes.

Saint Joseph's College responds to the physical and mental needs of its students of various modalities through a number of learning initiatives that include substance abuse prevention, violence prevention, and bystander training (Green Dot). Other related work is provided through the Health and Wellness Center, which is staffed by a licensed adult nurse practitioner and one registered nurse, as well as a medical assistant who meet the needs of on-campus students. The Wellness Center conducts weekly fitness classes which include Zumba, yoga, cardio kickboxing, hula hoop fitness, tai chi, balance/stability core and strength, step and sculpt, kettlebell, and aqua fitness in the pool.

In 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the College expanded and relocated the existing health center to include space for a dedicated lab, three exam rooms, two triage rooms, professional staff offices, a conference room, and expanded waiting room and bathroom facilities.

In August 2013, the College instituted a campus-wide tobacco and smoke-free policy; and in 2018, this policy was updated to include prohibiting tobacco-free e-cigarettes and vaping. Saint Joseph's College has been recognized for these efforts by the State of Maine.

The Counseling Center is staffed by a licensed psychologist and two full-time licensed clinical social workers who provide assessments; individual psychotherapy; substance abuse assessment; individual, couples, and family counseling; crisis management services; prevention and educational programs (e.g., time management, assertiveness skills); and consultation services. Counseling Center staff also offer RESPOND, an 8-hour training program offered to staff, faculty, and student leaders at the College. The goal is to train front-line individuals to identify and respond to initial signs of mental health challenges, distress, and suicidality.

The Counseling Center is also home to the Prevention Advocacy Corner (PAC) which is staffed by a college employee dedicated to educating about and preventing community violence. The PAC was started through a 3-year grant received from the Office of Violence Against Women (OVW) and the U.S. Department of Justice in 2018.

Students are encouraged to be active in student governance. The Student Government Association (SGA) sponsors and funds more than 25 different clubs and organizations and encourages students to propose new programs. The SGA has 13 executive Board positions, as well as a separate Student and Academic Senate representing the needs of students in every academic program at the College. Students are involved in search committees for high-level positions including President of the College, Dean of Students, Chief Mission Integration Officer, College Chaplain, Director of Campus Safety & Emergency Preparedness, and Chief Athletics & Recreation Officer. Additionally, the College's All-College Governance Committee, examining financial health of the College, strategic planning, mission, and college environment, include students.

The varsity teams compete in the NCAA Division III and are members of the Great Northeast Athletic Conference (GNAC). There are 21 varsity sports and two junior varsity teams totaling approximately 400 student athletes. The athletics department also coordinates intramural programs involving over 500 students. There are five club sports: eSports, cheerleading, the dance team, and men and women's club ice hockey. From campus interviews, close to 50% of the Saint Joseph's College student body are athletes. Academic expectations for student athletes who are made to attend mandatory study halls, are no less than those of non-athletes. From campus interviews, coaches understand their roles in student recruitment, persistence and retention as important.

Weekly entertainment programs for on-campus students are sponsored by the Campus Activities Board (CAB). From campus interviews, a variety of activities that help to keep students on campus during weekends include bringing in food trucks.

The Student Handbook, updated yearly, describes various policies and procedures that include academic integrity, student code of conduct, educational rights and privacy policy, student grievance policy, sexual assault policy and sexual harassment. For the on-line program, there is a separate Student Handbook (also updated annually) where course policies and procedures, academic honesty policies, and policies on student conduct and plagiarism are spelled out. The Nursing Program also has a separate Student Handbook. A policy on adjudicating incidents of disputes and student's right to privacy and confidentiality of academic records are included in the handbooks.

For their financial aid at the College, prospective students and their parents can receive an estimate by using the Net Price Calculator. Incoming students and their parents receive additional information about financial aid at the June/July orientations, where questions can be asked, and forms dropped off. Prior to borrowing, students and parents are provided with information on cost, debt, and repayment. The College's website has information on financial aid.

STANDARD 6 - TEACHING, LEARNING, AND SCHOLARSHIP:

Faculty and Academic Staff
The faculty "comprises all persons having appointment for the instruction of students" per the Faculty Handbook. At the time of the Self-Study this meant approximately 225 faculty members, with 1/3 full-time and 2/3 part-time (75 and 150). Over the past 10 years, on-campus faculty declined in both full- and part-time positions, while on-line grew, particularly the full-time faculty

(from 5 to 11). Recent program eliminations and voluntary separations have dropped the full-time faculty to approximately 62 per the August 26 Faculty Senate minutes, confirmed with the VPCLO. This includes 6 On-line Program Director positions. While the number of students has also declined, the concern from the 2011 team report that the full-time faculty "may be spread thin" remains. Continued program closures, reductions in force, and uncertainties about future directions have taken a toll on faculty and academic staff morale, though most remain "cautiously optimistic."

Faculty categories are listed in the Faculty Handbook and include "ordinary" (all full-time, tenured or tenure track faculty) and non-ordinary (all other faculty). The Faculty Handbook indicates that Assistant, Associate and Full Professors are the ordinary faculty, but also lays out criteria for Instructors, who seem to also be considered ordinary faculty. Non-ordinary faculty include full-time, ranked, non-tenure track faculty, pro-rata faculty who are ranked but assigned less than full-time duties, and per course/adjunct faculty.

The College has set a guideline for its balance of full-time tenure-line faculty and all other faculty as stated in the Faculty Handbook chapter 8: "The number of full-time non-ordinary faculty members, exclusive of faculty in the on-line programs, will not exceed 30% of the total of non-ordinary and ordinary full-time faculty." The Faculty Senate minutes confirmed that in August there were 36 full-time ordinary (tenured and tenure track faculty) and 19 non-ordinary faculty members, meaning approximately 35% non-ordinary. In a fall 2020 campus survey, only 33% of on campus full-time faculty said that there are too many courses in their department being taught by adjuncts. This was not disaggregated by program or degree level. On-campus interviews indicated that particularly for graduate programs and programs which lost staff but gained students recently, adjuncts teach the vast majority of the courses.

The level of integration of on-ground and on-line faculty, and the level of integration of part-time faculty into on-ground or on-line departments, varies substantially. Nursing and Sociology have adopted a "one department" approach, with on-line and on ground, full and adjunct faculty meeting together. There is a similar effort in the Education programs. On-line departments with primarily adjunct faculty do not seem to have much integration at all. In on-campus meetings, at least one faculty member indicated that due to disruptions in the last 5 years it can be unclear whether on-line and on-campus versions of the same course contain the same content, assessments, or rigor.

According to the Self-Study, all ordinary and non-ordinary full-time and pro-rata faculty, on-line Program Directors, and two nominated part-time faculty are voting members of the Faculty Senate (a committee of the whole model). The Faculty Handbook chapter 10 specifies voting roles for 3 part-time faculty members elected by the part-time faculty, with no more than 2 and no less than 1, from the fully on-line programs. This effort at representation of part-time faculty is admirable, though currently no part-time faculty serve despite efforts to recruit some. No compensation is provided for part-time faculty service beyond their contract, potentially limiting their integration into and engagement with the department or broader campus. The team only met 1 part-time faculty member during the site visit.

All full-time and pro-rata faculty are also eligible to serve on campus committees. Two faculty serve on each of the 5 All-College Committees, and faculty also serve on 6 committees of the

Faculty Senate (4-year college educational policies, on-line educational policies, rank and tenure, faculty development, library, and executive). In the fall 2020 survey of full-time faculty, 75% had not served on any All-College committees (41 of 55 faculty), meaning service has been limited to a small group. This was confirmed in interviews, with COVID playing a role slowing turnover. The limited group of faculty able to engage in the All College governance system may help to explain the results of the 2019 Great Colleges to work for survey which showed that Shared Governance, Communication and Fairness were three topics rated well below average. Interviews indicated that perceived lack of clarity about future college plans and lack of strategic investment in faculty may have affected the results in 2019. Faculty were not involved in the recent program elimination process. The Administration asked for engagement in that process around 2015, but disagreement over the audit process (run by an external consultant) and criteria resulted in the Faculty Senate's refusal to participate. The move to the All College Committee system included a requirement that the system be evaluated formally by the All College Institutional Effectiveness Committee, focusing on whether communication has improved and whether decisions are made in a more informed manner.

Academic staff were not defined in the Self-Study but seem to include librarians teaching information literacy, advisors (particularly the staff of the Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) and learning advisors for on-line students), and instructional designers (particularly the Technology Enhanced Instruction staff). Interviews indicated the library has 6 librarians, of whom 2 focus on information literacy and instructional collaborations with faculty. The ACE has 3 people who serve as advisors for undeclared majors. Six learning advisors provide advising to all on-line students. Technology Enhanced Instruction (TEI) has 4 staff members who provide LMS support, faculty training, and instructional design. The limited number of instructional design staff was noted as a challenge in Standard 7 of the Self-Study as it limits new course and program development. Interviews with TEI staff and faculty confirmed that TEI is at capacity. In terms of the library, first year students and seniors rated their ability to "form a new idea or understanding from various pieces of information" significantly lower than peers. This may reflect a need for continued work between faculty and librarians, or additional library staff devoted to information literacy.

The full-time faculty all have either masters or doctorate degrees. The credentials of the part-time faculty and academic staff were not included in the data first forms. Interviews on campus confirmed that all part-time faculty are expected to have at least a master's degree. Some part-time faculty have substantial experience in their field.

The Faculty Handbook has a brief procedure for hiring new faculty. For on-campus faculty hires, department representatives or the chair conducts a search after posting the job in local and national locations. For on-line hires, the Program director runs the search and "faculty or staff members participate as appropriate." The VPCLO makes all final appointments. The Self-Study indicates that "Human Resources publishes a recruitment guide for all hiring managers, which is available on the College website" and the College's JEDI task force "provides a statement to be included in all applicable Human Resource documents, including job postings and contracts." Discussions with HR make clear they staff each search and there is good compliance with policies. No goals for diversity, equity or inclusion among faculty have been developed. Written contracts specific

to each type of faculty or work are provided as part of hire. The role of faculty in hiring academic staff is unclear.

There is broad agreement among administrators and faculty that salaries are not currently competitive. Budget constraints have prevented "optimal investment" in "sustaining competitive employees' compensation" as the Self-Study noted. There have been 1% annual increases in full-time faculty salaries most years since FY2016. A merit-pay award program existed from 2014-5 to 2020 with 82 awards of approximately $1000 each. A comparable salary analysis for faculty and staff was done in 2018 showing 29 faculty below the 20th percentile and 53 below the median of the CUPA comparison group, requiring over $700,000 in funds to compensate (there was a similar disparity for staff). The results have not been implemented due to other priorities and needs. The fall 2020 survey of full-time on campus faculty indicated that 68% felt merit compensation was inadequate (with an additional 28% undecided). The same survey indicated that 80% of faculty were dissatisfied with overall compensation, 60% with benefits, and 62% disagreed that the College compensation would attract quality faculty. No survey of part-time faculty or academic staff seems to have been done. Multiple faculty interviewed expressed awareness that "survival issues" had overtaken strategic focus on salaries.

All faculty (including part-time) and academic staff can apply for tuition remission for Saint Joseph's College courses (on campus or on-line). Academic staff mentioned this in particular as a valued benefit. Professional development funding for full-time ordinary and non-ordinary, and pro-rata faculty, is available via the Faculty Development Committee, though some Program Directors found it harder to get than other faculty. 10-week (but not 12-week) part-time on-line faculty are required, per their contracts, to demonstrate "continuing professional development" including publication and presentation of research, and attendance at assigned faculty workshops, but no funding or compensation seems to be provided for part-time faculty of any type. Recently the College contracted with McAllister and Quinn to assist faculty and staff with grant applications. Professional development for academic staff is part of the annual budgeting process. No budget has been available for TEI staff to expand their skills in more than 5 years. There are two Faculty Professor Awards (one for Assistant Professors and Instructors, one for Professors) which provide research funds to full-time faculty. Full-time tenure track nursing faculty also have access to Educational Assistance Benefits funds to complete their doctorate.

All full-time faculty members teach a base load of 24 credits or equivalent. This is generally 3 four-credit courses per semester on campus and 4 three-credit courses per semester on-line. The fall 2020 survey of full-time faculty showed most faculty "agree that their workload is roughly the same as their peers." Program Director positions, which have faculty status and rank, may or may not include teaching and focus on program development, marketing, recruitment, hiring of adjuncts and program improvement. For this reason, Program Directors are hired for 12 months. Part-time faculty "may hold contracts in several different modalities with various load definitions, as well as course development contracts" per the Self-Study. These are monitored by Program Directors and HR to ensure part-time faculty maintain part-time status.

The institution defines the expectations for and responsibilities of Faculty in the Faculty Handbook and Employee Handbook, which are readily available on-line. The Faculty Handbook chapter 3 notes that "Acceptance of a contract shall be deemed to include an agreement by both parties to

comply with appropriate regulations of the College." This is matched by language in the contracts requiring faculty to abide by the Faculty Handbook, and in the case of on-line faculty, the College On-line Policy Manual.   The College was unable to locate a copy of anything called an On-line Policy Manual, though the Self-Study Appendices had a table of contents for it and the Manual is referred to in the Guidebook for Faculty Teaching On-line Courses. The Guidebook includes a wealth of useful information, including "the overall responsibilities, duties, and rights for part-time, per course, non-ordinary faculty." These are similar to those in the written contracts. The Guidebook has compensation tables from 2016, and references to CIDET (Center for Instructional Design and Educational Technology), not the current TEI, which suggests it may be out of date. It was not accessible on the website unlike the other handbooks, which seems problematic for part-time adjunct faculty.

Chapter 5 of the Faculty Handbook lays out the professional responsibilities of the ordinary faculty, including regulations regarding fair and equitable treatment of students and a statement of professional ethics. Chapter 8 lays out procedures and responsibilities for non-ordinary faculty. Chapter 6 has a grievance procedure, and Chapter 7 covers termination procedures, including non-reappointment. Part 3 of the Handbook includes academic policies and procedures for all faculty. The Faculty Handbook does not include updates to the 2003 Employee Handbook, which are posted on a separate website: https://my.sjcme.edu/resources/human-resources/handbooks-and-policies/. This includes employment offer and background check information, conflict of interest policy, harassment policies, professional and personal appearance rules, etc. The updates include the part-time clinical faculty tuition remission policy: https://rt6uw2a87oiuoclce9l10sya-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/8_22_Tuition_Remission_Part-time_Clinical_Nursing_Faculty_1_1_19.pdf   The relationship between the two Handbooks is not clear, nor is the relationship between the Faculty Handbook and the On-line Faculty Policy Manual. Attention to updating, integrating, and making accessible all policies related to faculty and academic staff is needed.

The Faculty Handbook also addresses academic freedom. Chapter 5 makes clear that "each faculty member has the right to hold and express personal religious beliefs" but faculty may not "denigrate the beliefs, teachings, and theological opinions of any faith."   "Scholarly, constructive, and relevant critique of those beliefs, teachings, and theological opinions" is seen as supporting the mission and institutional goals. Chapter 6 has explicit institutional statements of support for academic freedom. The Self-Study suggests 81% of full-time faculty agree academic freedom is protected by the College. The situation for part-time faculty is less clear. When the Handbook lays out rights for non-ordinary faculty (chapter 8), full-time faculty are guaranteed "contractual rights to academic freedom, fringe benefits, promotion, and sabbatical leave" while academic freedom is not listed as a contractual right for pro-rata and per-course faculty. Adjunct contracts mention academic freedom as an obligation of all community members to "foster and defend." The Guidebook for Faculty Teaching On-line Courses includes a robust statement of academic freedom.

The Faculty Handbook has a brief paragraph on research on human subjects, but other policies and procedures related to research do not appear. The Handbooks and policies page of the website do not contain research policies nor does the Student Handbook.

The criteria for promotion and tenure of ordinary faculty are laid out in chapters 2 and 3 of the Faculty Handbook. In the case of tenure this includes the needs of the College. Student evaluations are a "key measure of performance." In 2015, the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate charged the Rank and Tenure Committee with the task of instituting new procedures for faculty review at the College. They created a 3rd year review, which is now part of the tenure process. The Visiting Team was not able to meet with any tenure-track faculty to discuss the new process.

In 2015, the Rank and Tenure Committee also created an annual formative review process, included in the 2018 academic plan. With the departure of the Dean in 2018, the annual faculty review program stalled. Yearly review by department chairs and VPCLO are currently "informal, and periodic" according to the Self-Study. The VPCLO is working with the Rank and Tenure Committee to come up with a more sustainable plan for annual faculty review. For faculty not on the tenure-track, evaluation criteria are unclear. According to interviews with academic leaders, it is anticipated that non-ordinary faculty review, particularly that of Program Directors, will eventually include benchmarks for product development, marketing, recruitment, and delivery. The role of scholarship and campus service was less clear, although Program Director contracts specifically include the requirement to "establish and maintain your expertise in your field of study". The VPCLO saw these positions as staff contracts with faculty status. The criteria for evaluation and renewal of part-time faculty members resides with Program Directors and Department Chairs.

Academic staff are evaluated via RISE performance assessments quarterly through the company ADP. This covers performance, behavior, and goals.

The scholarly expectations of the ordinary faculty are laid out in the Faculty Handbook, chapters 2 and 3, and are appropriate for a teaching-focused institution. The Self-Study includes a list of faculty scholarship that suggests many full-time faculty make time to pursue research and professional development. The Faculty Innovation Center highlights and celebrates faculty research and grant acquisition accomplishments; the science faculty have been particularly successful at acquiring grant funds. Understandably, interviews indicated faculty scholarship has been more difficult during the past five years of repositioning and reprioritization. Part-time faculty in disciplines with licensure stay current in the theory, knowledge, or skills of their discipline through the continuing education required for licensure.

For advising, full-time faculty advise on-campus students in their majors who cannot register without advisor permission. Undeclared students are advised by the Academic Center for Excellence staff. The Self-Study discussed a 2011 advising handbook (2013 for nursing) and mentioned that new faculty receive training from the Associate Dean (no longer with the College). According to the fall 2020 survey of full-time faculty, 66% agreed they could spend adequate advising time with students, but only 36% agreed they received adequate training and support to be successful. As with much of the faculty data, disaggregation by major, student load, or years of service would be helpful. In the 2020 NSSE survey 58% of students rated their interaction with their academic advisor as 5 or higher on a 7-point scale while 70% rated broader interaction with faculty 5 or higher. Guided by this data, the Office of Academic Affairs created an Academic Advising Guide for faculty and staff now available on the campus website. A few faculty seemed aware of the new guide.

On-line students are advised differently. Each student is assigned a learning advisor from the On-line Student Support Staff. With a caseload of 200 students per advisor, this staff of 6 (plus a Director) must have a BA, and skills in customer service, collaboration, and helping skills. Each specializes in particular degree programs, and there is a training handbook and process. Students must consult their advisor or they cannot register. Learning advisors have developmental meetings twice per year with the Director. Professional development includes on-campus collaborations with health services to expand knowledge of students and mental health, and access to material and workshops from a national professional organization. The on-line faculty have resources to help them work with these learning advisors and collaborate to better support students at https://my.sjcme.edu/resources/faculty-staff/handbooks/on-line-faculty-resources/

Teaching and Learning
In the fall 2020 campus survey of full-time faculty, 91% agreed that they are comfortable that their methods of instruction are appropriate to the students' abilities and needs. The survey indicated that "diverse pedagogies" are used, with the top three being lecture (100%), class-based discussion (85.4%) and case studies (64.5%). The Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) has been fielded three times (2016, 2018, 2020) but no data from that instrument was presented in the report, nor information from part-time faculty who are the majority in many programs.

NSSE data cited in Standard 8 of the Self-Study indicated that students have significantly higher than average satisfaction with community-based learning than peers at comparison institutions, and both first year and senior students experienced this high impact practice more often than peers. This is a strength of the institution. The NSSE data also indicated some areas for focused attention. The higher order learning and reflective and integrative learning satisfaction scores were significantly lower than New England private school & Carnegie Class competitors and less than previous NSSE responses for first year and senior students. This is echoed by the withdrawal questionnaire data which indicated that on-campus students withdraw primarily due to academic components – lack of academic challenge, needed courses not available, quality of instruction did not meet expectations. Numbers but no reasons were given in the Self-Study for on-line program student withdrawal. Since learning advisors are required to contact all their on-line students on a regular basis, including those not enrolled for 1 year, they would be a good source for further information in this area.

Most programs ensure that students are taught by a range of faculty to ensure diversity of approach and content. According to the data first forms, a few programs – the on-line graduate MBA/MASS, on-line pastoral theology, on-line undergrad health administration, and social work - have no full-time faculty. Other programs have only 1 faculty member listed, specifically criminal justice, health and wellness, on-line education, on-line graduate health administration, and on-line undergraduate theology. In interviews, faculty did indicate concerns that students in a variety of programs experience no diversity of instructor or approach.

80% of full-time faculty agreed they had adequate support in their academic program for quality instruction and 74% had adequate support for improving their instructional effectiveness, according to the fall 2020 campus survey. There is a faculty teaching, learning and best practices conference on campus each July, which part-time faculty are required to attend per their contract.

All on-line adjunct faculty are required to complete Quality Matters modules prior to teaching to help ensure consistency and quality instruction.

According to the Bridge report and interviews, this September the Assistant Dean rolled out faculty training on Pinestand which is designed to enhance advising, drive persistence and increase retention. Pinestand implementation for fall 2021 is geared towards first-year students and first-year advisors. The goal with implementation was to offer students a pathway to sign in and book either an advising and/or career support appointment. As of October 20th, 99% of first year students and their advisors used the system.

STANDARD 7 - INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES:

Human Resources
The Human Resources function at Saint Joseph's College, while not addressed in the narrative of the Self-Study, appears to provide comprehensive human resources services to the institution.

Although the past year has been challenging, the institution has in general been successful in recruiting and retaining employees. Despite a period of reorganization and position reductions beginning in FY2017, staffing levels, while thin, appear to be adequate to support the College's mission.

Hiring practices are well-defined, with HR providing support to both staff and faculty recruitment processes, including applicant tracking software to organize the candidate pool. Employees receive written letters of appointment (for staff) or contracts (for faculty), from HR or the VPCLO's office respectively.

Searches are increasingly attentive to employee diversity and to DEI issues in general as part of the institution's JEDI initiative. A search for a newly created Chief Diversity Officer position will begin later in 2021.

Wage and salary levels are benchmarked against the CUPA-HR data bases. Following a compensation study which identified positions that were paid below market levels, efforts are beginning to bring positions closer to market levels, which the institution defines as the median of the CUPA-HR ranges. There have also been adjustments in food service and housekeeping staff wages, needed in order to hire successfully into these positions. All positions have written descriptions and are pegged to one of the CUPA-HR ranges.

HR policies are written and available on the institution's web site. In progress is the development of a comprehensive, searchable on-line employee guidebook to collect all policies and procedures in one location. Grievance procedures are well developed. Regulatory compliance is managed with the assistance of outside legal counsel.

There appears to be a robust system of administrator/staff evaluation using the ADP performance software. Using an assessment tool, employees are evaluated quarterly based on their performance of the elements in their job descriptions, their adherence to the core values of the campus and

progress against individual goals. The process is being further refined to include individual key performance indicators.

The institution is attentive to professional development. Although funding for travel to conferences has been minimal, employees have various opportunities for professional development, through both internally developed educational programs and external podcasts and webinars.

The HR office is beginning work on the development of a strategic staffing model that will incorporate succession planning and department-level business continuity plans.

Financial Resources

The past few years have been turbulent for Saint Joseph's College. An enrollment shortfall in FY2017 led to a number of interventions, including cycles of reorganization, layoffs, academic program sunsetting, and other efforts to reconfigure operations and reduce costs while working on strengthening revenues. These efforts were somewhat successful, despite the challenges of the pandemic, with net operating gains in every subsequent year (except FY2020, which produced a $428K operating loss) and overall increases in net assets in all subsequent years.

The FY2022 budget anticipated relatively strong financial performance, with an expected operating gain of $1.6 million. However, the fall 2021 FT campus-based actual enrollment was 707, down 82 full-time students or 10% from the budgeted 789 total. The lower overall enrollment is the result of a combination of reduced entering classes and lower retention. With little room for further cost reduction, this enrollment shortfall is putting significant pressure on the budget, which is currently forecast to produce an operating loss on the order of $1.0 to $2.0 million.

These results represent a significant challenge to an institution that has relatively few degrees of freedom in its financial condition, which is characterized by other areas of fragility:

- Invested funds are modest, $18.5 million as of June 30, 2021, with only $3.7 million free of donor restrictions. The College's spending policy is conservative—4% of a rolling 36-month average—but regardless of spending level, the endowment does not provide substantial operating support.
- Debt levels are significant. At $15.0 million, debt represents 21% of total assets.
- Cash is very tight. Day's cash on hand, including unrestricted investment funds, as of October 2021 is 38.3 days. Based on working capital alone, the level is 11.3 days. The College does maintain a $1.5 million line of credit. Through careful cash management practices, the line has not been accessed in the past three years.
- The institution is very tuition dependent, with about 90% of FY2021 revenues attributable to student charges. This makes it more difficult for an enrollment shortfall to be ameliorated by other revenue streams. The 2021 Strategic Plan identified goals to reduce the level of tuition dependency by strengthening other areas of revenue over the next five years, including gifts and grants (to provide 5% of revenue); non-degree tuition, including certificate programs (to provide 5% of revenue) and campus events and conferences (to provide 5% of revenue). If this can be accomplished, it still leaves the institution very dependent on tuition.

- Despite "balancing the operating budget" in most recent years, financial pressures have meant that optimal funding for capital renewal and maintenance in both physical facilities and technology and for faculty and staff compensation has not been achievable.

There are some promising aspects of the College's FY2022 financial performance to date, although they are as yet early developments:
- As of October 2021, applications for fall 2022 are up from 27 to 143 over October of 2020. This is an early indication that enrollment results may improve in FY2022.
- Unrestricted gifts and pledges to date total $424 thousand, 50% of the total budgeted level.
- There appears to be broad agreement among the Board members and the institutional leadership that, while further expense trimming is not likely to be productive given the reductions that have already been made, more comprehensive institutional transition is the key to insuring that the College prospers. Discussion and exploration are beginning on a number of fronts, including non-degree offerings, shared services agreements and new initiatives (The Institute for Integrated Aging, as an example). A Board Committee on Mission Aligned Businesses/Sustainable Enterprises has formed to focus on the new initiative efforts. While still at a very early stage, the recognition that fundamental change will likely be needed is important and encouraging.

The Advancement Office is a relatively small group (like virtually all College departments) that has worked diligently to modify its fundraising approach to accommodate the limitations presented by the pandemic. They have developed a variety of ways to use on-line resources to cultivate alumni and donors. They are currently working to reframe giving from one-time contributions to ongoing institutional support, focusing on the continuing and evolving priorities of the institution. Achieving the plan goals for levels of gifts and grants (5% of total revenues within 5 years) appears to be a significant challenge, requiring a doubling of the FY2022 budgeted levels.

Like other institutions of higher education, the COVID 19 pandemic has provided a stress test of Saint Joseph's ability to respond to unforeseen circumstances. In general, the College is managing its way through the crisis, having successfully made the myriad adjustments needed to deal with safety issues, changes in pedagogy, off-campus student populations and other aspects of the pandemic.

What has been most disrupted is the institution's ability to plan and execute those plans in an orderly way. The institution updated its 2014 strategic plan in 2021, but multi-year financial planning and capital budgeting has been disrupted both by the pressures and uncertainties of the pandemic and the unforeseen enrollment declines in fall 2021. A capital budgeting process is expected to be restored for the FY2023 budget cycle. And rather than focus on multi-year forecasting at a time of significant uncertainty, the institution is looking broadly at a range of possible contingencies as a way to develop responses to the latest financial pressures. As part of this work, the College plans to provide a detailed three-year forecast to the Board's Finance Committee at its February 2022 meeting.

The Board of Trustees has both a Finance Committee and an Audit/Risk Management Committee to provide oversight of financial matters. The committees are actively engaged in both enacting

their fiduciary obligations with respect to reviewing materials and processes and increasingly with discussions of strategic issues related to their committee charges.

Financial aid policies appear to be well understood and appropriately implemented. A financial aid optimization model provides a tool for determining how to award a combination of need-based and merit-based aid, given that full demonstrated need cannot be met. Net tuition revenue per student has been relatively level over the past few years, but despite careful attention to aid levels awarded, the discount rate for on-campus students has averaged 52% over the past several years (reaching 55% in the fall of 2021) and continues to exert downward pressure on the level of net student revenues.

The institution has a Chief Financial Officer and a financial staff that appears of sufficient size to provide adequate support. Although the financial staff as a whole has considerable longevity at the College, of concern is the turnover in the CFO position. Since fall 2013, the College has had two Chief Financial Officers, plus two Interim CFOs, and the current CBFO, in place since 2019, has recently resigned. This level of turnover makes any continuity in financial planning and strategy exceedingly difficult. While the Controller and her staff can keep routine systems and processes moving forward, the frequent turnover in the CFO position is a serious issue.

Despite the turnover in the CFO position, financial processes and procedures appear to be reliable and well-functioning. There is a defined operating budget process that is modified as conditions change. Risk management is taken seriously and a comprehensive Risk Register template has been developed and is in the process of being populated. The next steps will include a prioritization of risk together with an evaluation of the consequences of key risk areas. The annual financial statements are appropriately reviewed by external auditors and the Board Audit/Risk Management Committee. There have been no management letter comments in recent years.

Financial matters are openly discussed with campus constituencies, including an All Campus Budget Committee that meets periodically with the Chief Financial Officer. Financial policies are available on the College's web site.

Physical Resources
The College is located on an attractive 474-acre campus in Standish, Maine, with over 30 buildings. Facilities are managed internally, with staffing sufficient to support campus operations.

The campus has a current estimated replacement cost of $125 million with deferred maintenance levels estimated to be $10.2 million. This is a significant number, but one that is not an outlier among similar institutions. A facilities condition review completed in 2019 resulted in an index level of .097, the top of the "fair" range and represents a significant improvement over the previous dozen years, due in large part to major renovations and new construction. Despite the improvement, and exacerbated by the financial pressures of the pandemic, there remains an underinvestment in facilities. A detailed study of facilities was completed in 2021 which identified the current facilities condition index as .08, a continued improvement, but also cautioned that, at the present level of investment, the index is expected to rise to .11 in the next five years.

The building-by-building detail behind the Facilities Condition Index provides a key basis for the development of the annual capital budget, together with internal departmental requests and projects that enhance the student experience. While the institutional response to COVID 19 has disrupted the capital budget process, it is expected to resume for the FY2023 budget cycle.

Despite the disruption in the capital budget process, investment in facilities continued. The pandemic required a number of new responses from the facilities operation, including upgrading and retrofitting classroom spaces to enable remote learning, expanding the Health Center to accommodate isolation and quarantine spaces, and developing efficient methods of deep-cleaning spaces.

Regulatory compliance is carefully managed. A process of internal review and inspection is guided by a comprehensive schedule of requirements. In addition, the institution receives the assistance of outside architects, contractors and other vendors, who provide current information on changes in regulations and the impact of updated building codes. The department also maintains strong relationships with local municipal agencies.

Information and Technology Resources
Information and technology support are provided by the Information Technology Department and the Learning Commons, which includes the Wellehan Library and Technology-Enhanced Instruction. The departments have separate functions but work closely together.

The Library, which provides a balanced collection of resources to the campus community, has migrated its holdings over time from a primary focus on books and DVDs to a broader range of periodical subscriptions, e-books and films while continuing to provide access to a number of research data bases. In addition to the collection itself, the Library serves as a resource for faculty and students by providing information and support as well as spaces for collaborative work and private study. The current facility, while smaller in footprint, is adequate to support the needs of the department and the campus. Budget and staffing resources are tight but sufficient to allow the Library to support the campus.

Instructional support is provided by Technology-Enhanced Instruction, which develops on-line courses and supports faculty in using the learning management system and other instructional technology effectively. As the on-line curriculum grows, there will be increasing pressure to expand resources in this area.

The Information Technology Department provides systems management, networking, help desk, telephone and academic and administrative systems support, in addition to overseeing campus mail, printing and copying services. Staffing levels and budget are barely able to support the institution's growing need for IT services.

IT developed a comprehensive technology plan in 2017. The recently completed institutional strategic plan update provides the basis for updating the existing technology plan. A capital budget process for information technology is part of annual budget planning.

The College appears to have a sophisticated approach to cybersecurity, which has been regularly strengthened as tools like multi-factor authentication are added or improved. A robust emergency planning response and strong data backup and recovery protocols that include both local and cloud-based backup locations and redundant circuit pathways. A recent ransomware attack was handled quickly and effectively with no loss of data and limited system downtime. Cyber-insurance was in place to support additional costs and a follow-up forensic review indicted no evidence that data was misappropriated.

IT policies and procedures are written and available on the College's web site. This includes acceptable use policies detailing the requirements for safeguarding and use of personally identifiable information.

STANDARD 8 - EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS:

There are three distinct student populations for which Saint Joseph's College works to ensure its educational effectiveness: undergraduate on campus, undergraduate on-line, and graduate on-line. In addition to the traditional aggregate measures of student success such as persistence, retention, and graduation rates, the primary mechanisms for the assessment of student achievement across all three student populations are a set of institutional learning outcomes (ILOs), program learning outcomes (PLOs), and an ePortfolio. (The Self-Study refers to the ILOs and PLOs as "objective" statements and "outcome" statements at different points, but supplemental materials provided to the Visiting Team consistently used the word "outcomes.") It is important to note up front, based primarily on conversations during the Site Visit and analysis of the College's website, that educational effectiveness measures are further developed and more readily accessible for the undergraduate on campus population than the other two categories of students.

The Self-Study identifies two distinct phases in the development of an institution-wide assessment plan: the "groundwork" phase and the "continuous improvement loop" phase. Conversations with academic personnel revealed that work on the "groundwork" phase began in 2008, at which point there was no formal institution-wide assessment or system of program reviews at Saint Joseph's. Faculty devised and approved 10 ILOs and 41 sub-outcomes. In preparation for the NECHE comprehensive visit in 2011, a schedule of program reviews was implemented and PLOs were mapped to ILOs. Additionally, faculty were surveyed on whether their courses introduced, reinforced, or emphasized the 41 sub-outcomes. Upon completion of the comprehensive review, changes in leadership at the CAO level stalled this momentum in the area of assessment, before the institution could move into the "continuous improvement loop" phase through the introduction of rubrics in capstone classes.

In the build-up to the institution's current comprehensive review, the assessment trajectory was revived, and according to on-campus interviews "it felt like Groundhog Day." Saint Joseph's began again with a "groundwork" phase in 2020 and moved toward the "continuous improvement loop" phase. In the intervening years, the 10 ILOs had been reduced to 5 ILOs. The process by which the 5 ILOs were developed is not clear in the Self-Study, but a comparison to the institution's mission and values suggests that they are mission-appropriate; furthermore, the College Catalog and supporting documentation demonstrate that the ILOs are embedded in the

core curriculum, undergraduate academic majors, and graduate programs across all modalities. Although statements of learning outcomes (i.e., PLOs) are not accessible directly on program webpages, each program webpage features a link to the appropriate College Catalog section, wherein the outcome statements are published.

According to the Self-Study and verified during the campus visit, "all academic departments in the on-campus and on-line programs have completed the Groundwork Phase of the Assessment Loop. They have identified their departmental learning outcomes, aligned their learning outcomes to the Institutional Student Outcomes, identified how their individual courses align with the departmental learning outcomes, and have taken steps to identify metrics that can be used in their individual departments." Again, echoing the process prior to the institution's previous comprehensive visit in 2011, all programs completed a program review just prior to the comprehensive evaluation as the E-Series forms demonstrate (the only exception being the RN to BSN program, which was reviewed in 2019).

Alongside these efforts, Saint Joseph's began integrating an ePortfolio requirement into its curriculum for all modalities in 2018. According to the Self-Study, the ePortfolio is an "important step" in ensuring that all students meet the ILOs and PLOs prior to graduation. Effective with the incoming class of fall 2019, the ePortfolio was made a graduation requirement for all on-campus students. A sample ePortfolio for Bachelor's of Social Work students, which was included as an appendix to the Self-Study, suggests that one purpose of the ePortfolio is to provide "a body of evidence which validates your knowledge, skills, and ability to practice social work following a baccalaureate" degree. Additional materials and conversations with faculty and administrators indicated that other purposes of the ePortfolio include documentation of student achievement of ILOs; where applicable, alignment with competencies as mandated by program-specific accreditations; and, providing graduates with a way to showcase their work to potential employers. At multiple points, the Self-Study articulates the following goal: "By 2023, all on campus undergraduate students will have completed an ePortfolio demonstrating their completion of Institutional Learning Outcomes. A similar plan is in development for on-line programs and is expected to be completed by 2024-2025."

Importantly, there appears to be faculty buy-in for these assessment measures and a high degree of collaboration among the full-time faculty and on-line program directors. As stated in the Self-Study, "the work over the last several years of establishing new institutional learning outcomes (ILO's) and program outcomes (PLO's), revising the CORE curriculum and creating and implementing a new ePortfolio assessment system has involved a great deal of collaboration between faculty and staff across campus." Meetings with faculty chairs and program directors during the Site Visit corroborated this sentiment.

At the same time, as the Self-Study alludes to, progress in the "continuous improvement loop" phase varies widely by department and modality. With regard to the evaluation of the ePortfolios, for instance, "how this assessment is undertaken is up to each department." On-campus conversations revealed two dividing lines: generally speaking, professional programs with external accreditation requirements were further along than the more traditional fields of study, and on-campus programs were further along than most on-line programs (with the exception being on-line programs with external accreditation requirements). Department chairs and program directors

noted that the ePortfolio has been required of Education students for a decade and expressed that they will "be able to realize some of the benefits that our Education colleagues have been realizing for years" during exit interviews whereby graduating students can see their progression from the first year of study to the final year.

Given that the program reviews were shared with the Visiting Team only 48 hours prior to the visit, there was not enough time to review them in detail. A spot check of program reviews across the on-campus and on-line programs confirms that Saint Joseph's remains in the "groundwork phase" and has not yet begun to collect program-specific evidence to document outcomes. Evidence of outcomes achievement appears to consist primarily of inputs (e.g., courses taken) and anecdotal indicators of post-graduate success rather than systematic documentation of how graduates have met each stated outcome for the academic program. The Self-Study states that "Preliminary benchmarking data was obtained on the new institutional student learning outcomes to determine alignment of individual courses with the institutional learning outcomes, alignment with academic programs, and determining metrics for measuring departmental outcomes (Appendix 2.4)." However, an examination of Appendix 2.4 revealed a blank template absent any benchmarking data, further indicating that on the whole, Saint Joseph's remains largely in the "groundwork" phase of its assessment efforts.

Interviews during the Site Visit revealed a concern for the support of assessment at an institutional level. According to faculty and administrators, initiatives are "woefully under-supported" and despite good intentions and detailed planning documents such as the Institutional Learning Assessment Plan (April 2020), "it is the implementation phase where [assessment] really starts to stall." Turnover at the Chief Learning Officer position, and the interim nature of the current holder's appointment, have left institution-wide assessment subject to whether the CLO decides to emphasize it or not. Faculty, program directors, and administrators expressed a belief that assessment is an institutional emphasis at the current moment in time, but also a concurrent fear that it will not be when the next CLO assumes the position. The re-appointment of an Assessment Coordinator (a position she held as Director of Assessment from 2008-2015) from the faculty to oversee on-campus assessment, the charge to the Associate Dean to oversee assessment for on-line programs, and their close working relationship is encouraging. However, all parties acknowledged the newness of this structure: it was created in the fall of 2021, and they had yet to converse with the interim CLO on the topic. Additionally, the absence of a staff member fully dedicated to the Institutional Research function limits capacity in terms of institutional data collection and analysis. Through interviews during the Site Visit, it became clear that while the Registrar oversees some traditional IR functions, such as coordinating the NSSE survey, he does not have the capacity to tend to much more than that.

The institution uses a variety of measures to gauge student learning and alumni outcomes. In addition to the ePortfolios, the Self-Study noted that one program (Nursing) uses licensure passage rates as a measure of student success. The website contains additional information on Educational Praxis II pass rates for Elementary Education students. It was not clear, either in the Self-Study or in on-campus conversations, how these rates inform program improvement, if at all. The Registrar administers the NSSE survey on a regular basis, and data from the 2018 iteration was referenced in the Self-Study to highlight several institutional strengths (e.g., student interaction with faculty and community-based learning) and areas for improvement (e.g., higher-order learning and

reflective/integrative learning). The Self-Study makes reference to the FSSE survey, but no corresponding data were presented in the document or in the electronic workroom materials.

The Career Studio administers surveys to on-campus undergraduate alumni on an annual basis. As the Saint Joseph's College website reveals, the institution partnered with "The Outcomes Survey" to gauge alumni outcomes through 2018 before switching to Handshake's "First Destination Survey" for 2019 and subsequent iterations. The data on the website for the alumni surveys is more comprehensive for the Classes of 2017 and 2018, and less detailed for the more recent classes once the shift to Handshake was made. On-campus interviews revealed that the same comprehensive data is available through Handshake, but a recent transition in oversight for the Career Studio and the alumni surveys, in addition to the impact of COVID, has thus far inhibited Saint Joseph's staff from making full use of the available data through Handshake. It bears noting that over the past five years, the response rate to the alumni surveys has ranged from 45% to 52%. There was no evidence of surveys being sent to undergraduate on-line alumni or graduate alumni. On-campus conversations revealed that in certain departments, faculty maintain strong relationships with alumni of all types and can provide anecdotal evidence of their success in the field post-graduation, though this information is not currently utilized in a systematic way at the institutional level.

The institution also maintains data on the traditional measures of student success such as persistence, retention, and graduation. As the website reveals, the institution's retention rate ranged from 79% to 82% from 2015 to 2018 before dropping to 73% in 2019. Conversations on campus along with materials in the electronic workroom indicated that retention is a pressing issue for the institution, with the most recent fall 2020 class only retained at a rate of 63%. The institution has "high-level data" on those who withdrew from the College, obtained primarily through withdrawal questionnaires that can be sliced by major, housing status, hometown, and reason for withdrawal, among other variables. Interviews during the Site Visit revealed that staff and administrators are "digging into" these data and planning a "Retention Summit" for January 2022 in order to communicate the results to the rest of the campus and begin to coordinate an institution-wide response. Persistence rates from the first to second semester for first-year students (92.2% five-year average from 2014 to 2019) and four-, five-, and six-year graduation rates (59.4% five-year average for the 6Y rate from 2010 to 2014) were mentioned in the Self-Study and are available on the website, but their relevance to institutional planning was not a focus of the Self-Study or the Site Visit.

Of final note, many of the preceding measures of student success are readily available on the College's website for on-campus undergraduate students. By following the "Consumer Information" link at the bottom of the home page, visitors can find a "Student Outcomes" section with alumni survey results from the most recent five years, persistence and graduation rates, and licensure exam pass rates. Similar data for on-line students does not appear to be available on the "Consumer Information" page. It is not apparent where student success data for the institution's on-line programs is made available to the public.

In sum, measures of student success are collected, particularly for on-campus undergraduate students and alumni; however, as conversations across campus during the Site Visit revealed at multiple points, the "systems and processes" for coordinated use of the available data are not in place. This reality, along with the churn in administrative personnel, has hindered assessment from

being "intentional and strategic" at a college-wide level across all students and modalities, and, in Saint Joseph parlance, has forestalled movement from the "groundwork" phase into that of "continuous improvement."

STANDARD 9 – INTEGRITY, TRANSPARENCY, AND PUBLIC DISCLOSURE:

Integrity and "concern for the common good" are listed among the Core Values at St. Joseph's College of Maine, and are also reflected in its institutional learning outcomes. Policies for academic honesty and freedom, non-discrimination, and resolution of grievances are available in faculty and student handbooks; the staff handbook was originally created in 2003, with extensive updates and additions made available online. There are provisions (and protections) for individuals who may wish to report instances of illegal or dishonest behavior, as well as an anonymous tip line for individuals to report violations of policy, law, or conduct codes. Although the Self-Study cites one example of an error in financial aid awarding—which St. Joseph's reported to the Department of Education and have since rectified—conversations with campus constituents revealed no systematic dishonesty or misrepresentation at the College.

St. Joseph's fosters an inclusive atmosphere and in particular is working to promote the principles (justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion) in its JEDI initiative on campus, even as most constituents—including the Board of Trustees—expressed a desire for increased diversity on campus. Indeed, the Visiting Team encountered almost no students, faculty, or staff of color on campus or in their various meetings. People of color make up less than 5% of the faculty and academic staff and diversity counts for students were not shared as part of the Data First forms. The College has embedded justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion as part of its strategic plan, has created a new JEDI Workgroup, and has recently announced a scholarship for underrepresented students. Campus-wide statements in support of communities of color and LGBTQ+ communities have been circulated and posted on the website.

St. Joseph's emphasizes transparency in its dealings with members of its campus community and those external to the College. Conversations with constituents on campus reinforced themes of openness and honesty; and faculty, students, and staff all talked about frequent opportunities to provide feedback to the College. The All-College Committee System, a form of shared governance that allows for information exchange with the administration and Board of Trustees, also supports a culture of "radical transparency" at the College.

The St. Joseph's website is comprehensive and easily navigable. It contains summary information on mission, religious affiliation, accreditation, setting, costs, and other consumer information, though notice of availability of the College's most recently audited financials could not be found. Information on the size of the study body is given as "approximate" and is lacking in any information on characteristics other than on-campus vs. on-line. Policies and procedures around admissions, financial aid, and employment are readily available. Student outcomes, as part of its Consumer Information page, are limited to on-campus students, and include employment and earnings, persistence and graduation rates, and licensing exam pass rates. Broader consideration and measurement of student and alumni outcomes—and applied to students in other programs—could not be found.

Program offerings and associated faculty are listed on the website and are generally current, though in select cases, there are majors listed that are being suspended or phased out. Similarly, while there is a detailed catalog of course offerings and other academic policies and procedures, it is not always clear how often each course is offered, which students indicated can be an impediment to academic planning and progress. In general, more transparency in the offerings and outcomes within the academic program would be helpful in guiding and informing both current and prospective students. Coordination of communication in the development—or suspension—of programs between the academic, enrollment, and communication offices will also be key.

AFFIRMATION OF COMPLIANCE:

The Visiting Team reviewed numerous sources of information to assess whether Saint Joseph's College of Maine is in compliance with Federal regulations related to Title IV, including the College's Affirmation of Compliance form, which was signed by the President. The Visiting Team's assessment regarding Saint Joseph's transfer credit policy and articulation agreements confirmed the institution's public disclosures on its website and in its publications.

Copies of the Saint Joseph's grievance procedures for students are available on its website and in print communications.

After a review of the College's Affirmation of Compliance form and based on interviews, the Visiting Team did not find evidence that Saint Joseph's made a public notification of its pending NECHE reaccreditation visit, either on the College's website or in any local newsprint media.

SUMMARY:

Without doubt, the Saint Joseph's College of Maine community viewed with seriousness its NECHE reaccreditation evaluation process and used the development of its Self-Study document and the campus visit as an opportunity for self-reflection and assessment on the extent to which it fulfills its mission, along with identifying opportunities and needs for improvement. The Visiting Team acknowledges the immense effort Saint Joseph's put forth in developing its Self-Study document in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic challenges, along with numerous senior-level staffing changes, including the Chief Learning Officer. Saint Joseph's President and its Board of Trustees took seriously the directives from NECHE based on previous visits and evaluations, and the Visiting Team observed with favor numerous examples of positive planning and progress in addressing the College's challenges. In this concluding section, the Visiting Team offers the following as the most significant institutional strengths and concerns.

Strengths:

- As a Catholic College in the Mercy tradition, Saint Joseph's has a clearly articulated mission and set of core values, and in recent years, the College has realized renewed focus and passion around mission integration efforts. Notably, its JEDI initiatives have gained college-wide awareness, acceptance, and endorsement.

- The Saint Joseph's Self-Study document and campus meetings affirmed for the Visiting Team that the College's full-time faculty, administration, and staff are deeply committed to the institution and the fulfillment of its mission. The full-time faculty are aware of the enrollment and financial challenges facing the College, and campus meetings suggested to the Visiting Team the faculty's openness to transformation and innovation.

- This team report addressed previous NECHE evaluations of Saint Joseph's and the Commission's directive that in its 2021 Self-Study preparation, the College should give particular emphasis to its success in "implementing its strategic plan and evaluating progress made to achieve its goals." The Visiting Team observed in the College's refreshed 2021 strategic plan, *Sustaining the Promise: 2021-2026*, a number of emerging strengths, such as the plan's focus on transformation; "sustainable communities;" JEDI; and developing new market and mission-informed academic programs. Further, the Visiting Team's campus meetings supported the plan's stated focus on the development and annual monitoring of Key Performance Indicators and the plan's implementation progress, leading to the Visiting Team's observation that the College is positively addressing the NECHE area of emphasis around strategic plan monitoring.

Concerns:

- Also, ahead of Saint Joseph's 2021 Self-Study preparation, NECHE indicated the College should give particular emphasis to its success in "achieving its stated enrollment goals and assuring that the Board and senior leadership have a shared understanding of realistic enrollment goals" and "addressing the financial challenges of a high tuition discount rate combined with a high level of tuition dependence." With regard to Saint Joseph's ability to achieve success in enrollment management and long-range financial planning and budgeting, as noted in this report, the Visiting Team observes with concern the considerable personnel turnover at senior leadership position levels. The lack of stability in key senior leadership positions, coupled with the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, has limited the College's ability to meet enrollment goals and to progress in its long-range budget planning and forecasting. While new enrollment initiatives offer promise, the Visiting Team observed with concern the downward enrollment trend and its significant impact on the College's budgets and morale, especially as connected to recent reductions in force, and the elimination of several majors and programs. The Self-Study document's data revealed the College's downward enrollment trend commenced before the COVID-19 pandemic; fall 2021 enrollment data reveal further enrollment decline during the pandemic, emphasizing the urgency around the Saint Joseph's community embracing new admissions and retention initiatives. With well-known changing demographics forecasted for the years ahead, Saint Joseph's ability to diversify its student body will be a

key to sustained enrollment growth, as described in the College's strategic plan. Continued attention to monitoring the College's institutional financial aid expenditures while maximizing enrollment results also will be essential to growing enrollments and net student revenues.

- The Visiting Team observed that although Saint Joseph's Self-Study demonstrates a commitment to ongoing evaluation, there remains considerable room for improvement in "closing the loop," using assessment and evaluation data to inform strategy and initiatives supporting continuous improvement and institutional excellence. The Self-Study document revealed a flurry of program reviews and surveys that all were completed in preparation for the NECHE comprehensive review, which appears to mirror the approach to the assessment of student learning that preceded the institution's previous comprehensive review. In order to achieve sustained and lasting progress, ongoing evaluation and the assessment of student learning should become prioritized and coordinated at the institutional level. Closely related, the Visiting Team observes with concern Saint Joseph's absence of personnel dedicated solely to Institutional Research functions and responsibilities, notably with regard to producing and analyzing usable data for institutional evaluation, assessment, and planning. In addition, Institutional Research data likely will be useful in strengthening Saint Joseph's ability to address with specificity the future role of online programs in light of its strategic plan goals.