Report to Faculty, Administrators, Trustees, Students of

Brooklyn College
City University of New York (CUNY)
Brooklyn, NY 11210

Prepared following analysis of the institution's
Periodic Review Report

First Reviewer:
Maren N. Hess
Assistant Provost for Institutional Research, Assessment, and Accreditation
Campbell University
Buies Creek, NC 27506

Second Reviewer:
Karen S. Goldman
Assistant Director for Outreach, Center for Latin American Studies
University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, PA 15260

August 1, 2014
I. Introduction

Brooklyn College, a public liberal arts institution offering undergraduate and graduate programs, is one of the ten senior Colleges in the City of New York system. It serves a primarily full-time undergraduate population and a primarily part-time graduate level population with a robust set of academic and co-curricular programs. The College was originally founded in 1930 and reflects its dynamic and diverse population within its mission statement:

We are an urban, public institution, proudly situated in one of the most dynamic and diverse communities in the country. We are committed to student success and to our historic mission to provide an affordable, high-quality education to students of all backgrounds.

The Periodic Review Report (PRR) provides the Reviewers with a comprehensive overview of institutional progress since the College's decennial self-study and team visit in 2009. Many changes have been initiated internally as well as within the CUNY structure requiring Brooklyn College to evolve. Since the decennial visit, Brooklyn College has welcomed a new President, Dr. Karen L. Gould, who led the College through several changes in the administrative structure at the cabinet level, and within the following offices: Enrollment Management, Communications and Marketing, and Institutional Advancement. In 2011, a five-school structure was introduced, adding four schools to the pre-existing School of Education. The Office of Academic Affairs was also restructured under three Associate Provost positions: Faculty and Administration, Academic Programs, and Planning and Special Projects.

The PRR moved the Reviewers through the changes and descriptively detailed the antecedents leading to changes as well as the processes and procedures which were documented throughout the evolution. Throughout the administrative and academic changes, new College-wide plans were created and implemented, including a Strategic Plan, Facilities Master Plan, Diversity, and Assessment Plan.

The report is comprehensive, but required unanticipated effort to digest as links were misdirected or pointed to the first page of a multi-page report, and the amount of supporting evidence included in appendices was overabundant. Inconsistencies between figures stated in the narrative and supporting documentation were challenging for the Reviewers. For example, the narrative denotes 70 graduate programs, but the accompanying link to the appendix shows 120 graduate programs and 10 advanced certificates. It is surprising that clean copies of reports without handwritten notes or highlights were unable to be included.

The process by which the PRR was created appears to have been inclusive of multiple constituencies across the College. It also had levels of review from sub-committees to open comments to the President's Cabinet.
II. Responses to Recommendations from the Previous Decennial Evaluation

Brooklyn College had to respond to only one recommendation that was made by the visiting team in 2009. This recommendation echoed one of their internal self-study recommendations to "review and assess the graduate program offerings, not only with a view toward expansion in areas of high demand that are mission-central, but also with a view toward discontinuing graduate programs in areas of low demand that are not mission-central." In direct support of this recommendation was a corollary for the College to define its mission relative to graduate programs, and ensure robust assessments are incorporated into the graduate programs.

In a structured, well-documented series of events spanning the course of the past four years and projected for the upcoming 2014-2015 academic year, the College has met the aspects of the visiting team's recommendation. Emanating from the internal self-study for this identified need, the College has incorporated graduate programs in the College mission statement and has created a comprehensive review cycle complete with rubric templates for departments to review graduate programs. These rubrics were piloted (2011-2012) to assist in determining assessment status of graduate programs. Following the pilot, graduate program directors also did reviews at the department level (2012-2013) and deans reviewed the cycle and completed a school-level report (2013-2014). Links to the Graduate Assessment Chart as referenced in the Appendix were password protected, so the Reviewers cannot comment on these. An implementation team will begin the program review cycle starting in 2014-2015.

The Reviewers recommend that the College determine the efficacy of the new graduate program review process. This should include an evaluation of the previously documented uneven quality of enrollment, mission alignment, functionality of the articulated learning outcomes assessment process, and systematic use of assessment data to impact curriculum planning, student learning, and resource allocation.

In addition to the one recommendation provided by the visiting team, Brooklyn College has made progress on virtually all of the 38 recommendations the College gave itself during the last self-study process. Many of the recommendations have had action steps completed while several are still in the planning stage with action slated to begin 2014-2015.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standards of Excellence</th>
<th>Activity since the Reaffirmation (2009)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mission, Goals, and Planning (standards 1,2):</td>
<td>College mission statement updated, creation of robust graduate level program review process, creation of college-wide assessment plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 internal recommendations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources and Institutional Assessment (standards 3,7):</td>
<td>Creation of college-wide assessment plan, administrative and academic reorganization including new school structure, creation of facilities master plan, implementation of CUNYfirst, creation of technology planning committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 internal recommendations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance, Leadership, and Integrity (standards 4,5,6): 3 internal recommendations</td>
<td>Administrative and academic reorganization including new school structure, updates to governance plan, improved communications through new website inclusive of new logo and branding, audited internal communications strategies and planned improvements to begin fall 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students and Integrity (standards 6,8,9): 7 internal recommendations</td>
<td>Improved student engagement with new first year and transfer student programming, administrative and academic reorganization, improved student communication through website, advisement services, and new curriculum maps which should be in place for spring 2015 registration, consolidated services to streamline student services and reduce run-around</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty and Integrity (standards 6,10): 7 internal recommendations</td>
<td>Faculty succession planning assisted with hiring of almost 160 new faculty as tied to the strategic plan, faculty council master plan, and diversity plan, offered ongoing faculty development, transferred promotion and tenure to Associate Provost for Faculty and Administration, reallocating faculty assignments within course scheduling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Programs (standards 11,12,13): 4 internal recommendations</td>
<td>Revised annual report form for currently existing programs, began early faculty review of core curriculum due to CUNY Pathways Initiative, created graduate program review process inclusive of assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of Student Learning (standard 14): 8 internal recommendations</td>
<td>Created outcomes assessment plan inclusive of an assessment council, publicly described academic assessment activities on the webpage, administrative and academic reorganization.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As noted in the narrative, “Because we have only just begun to operate under the Brooklyn College Assessment Plan, the calendar for review of assessment data by the President’s Cabinet and the Assessment Council as specified in the Plan will be set and announced in 2014-15.”

*The Reviewers recommend that the College assess and articulate the efficacy of the Assessment Plan with respect to implementation and systemic adoption of activities designated therein. This follow-up should include evidence of academic program, co-curricular unit, and administrative unit assessment.*
III. Major Challenges and/or Opportunities

The PRR documents a clear internal understanding of the challenges and opportunities aligning with the Brooklyn College Strategic Plan and the CUNY Master Plan that will require effort and resources over the next five years and will likely be included as efforts to be addressed in the College’s next Strategic Plan (2016-2021).

**Academic**

Procedures to create and foster targeted program offerings within the undergraduate and graduate levels are in place. The College is putting many resources and much effort into creating the Barry R. Feirstein Graduate School of Cinema Studies as a specialized educational experience. Achieving additional specialized accreditation will strengthen the marketing position for the business programs. Overcoming the turbulent beginnings to the CUNY Pathways Program will be paramount for supporting a faculty-led general education review process. The emphasis to establish the College as a science destination should strengthen students’ interest in the College as well as facilitate their incoming transfer from other CUNY institutions.

Given the findings of the Compliance Reviewer, articulated under separate cover, as well as the introductory comments by Brooklyn College’s President concerning non-compliance with the Assignment of Credit Hours in accordance with 34 CFR 602.24(f) as referenced in the MSCHE publication *Verification of Compliance with Accreditation-Relevant Federal Regulations*, the Reviewers had to request further guidance from the Commission.

*The Reviewers recommend that the College report on its efforts to create a greater consistency in the determination of credit hour assignments.*

**Administrative**

The change in computing systems to CUNYFirst over the past few years will necessitate continued resources devoted to training, modification of business practices, and documentation of the updated practices. As the College gets accustomed to the new administrative and academic organizational structure, efficiencies will become more apparent and student flow between units should become easier. Focusing the efforts of the organizational structure on institutional effectiveness and articulating those efforts within the 2016-2021 strategic plan should be prioritized.

IV. Enrollment and Finance Trends and Projections

A thorough review of College finances is under separate cover, it is important to note that the financial performance in the recent past has been less than stellar, with a drastic decline in net assets, decline in state appropriations, and institutional revenue. The College has had a slight decrease in enrollment over the past few years but stable tuition and fees revenue based on tuition increases in accordance with the CUNY Compact. The College has made investment decisions to hire full-time faculty in direct support of the initiatives of the Strategic Plan.
Enrollment projections provided articulate flat summer enrollments based on summer 2013 figures. These represent approximately a 23% decrease in summer enrollments from a recent peak in 2009. The overall fall enrollment also is projected to be flat based on fall 2013 figures, with an anticipated growth of only 1% over the next five years. The graduate enrollment projections do not appear to include the proposed Barry R. Feirstein Graduate School of Cinema Studies, however they are included in the narrative as an anticipated headcount of 132 in fall 2015.

As the College’s operating budget is so markedly supported by tuition, thus enrollment, it is imperative that the College proceed with its articulated initiatives for strengthening the summer programs, enticing students to transfer into Brooklyn College, and using the new graduate program review process to refine and strengthen graduate level programs.

V. Assessment Processes and Plans

The College received benevolent comments in 2009 on the institutional effectiveness and student learning outcomes processes in place at the time. In the ensuing years, the College has strengthened its level of transparency by increasing the amount of academic assessment information accessible on its website, participating the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA) as well as other CUNY initiatives such as the Performance Management Process, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), NSSE Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI), the CUNY Student Experience Survey (SES), and the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), each of which contribute to the assessment of student learning, student experiences, or institutional effectiveness assessment at the College level.

Since 2009, as described previously, the College has undergone significant administrative and academic reorganization, affecting previously existing assessment processes. New planning and procedural documents were created collectively by the appropriate constituencies to guide the College. Assessment and institutional effectiveness appear to be paramount in the new communication pathways, including review and feedback. Graduate program review has been discussed previously, under Part II: Responses to Recommendations from the Previous Decennial Evaluation.

The last of the newly created plans supporting the College reorganization has been the Assessment Plan. It has been evolving over the past several academic years with refined emphasis on student learning outcomes and institutional effectiveness. While the new Assessment Plan has been revised, the College operated under the previously existing plan so there was no apparent lapse in program or student learning assessment. The Assessment Plan was launched to campus in spring 2014 inclusive of an Assessment Council consisting of five faculty and five academic administrators. This plan has not yet been put into action as of the writing of the PRR.

The Assessment Plan articulates three areas of faculty-driven assessment activity: general education, undergraduate programs, and graduate programs. The CORE curriculum was forced
into an earlier-than-anticipated review because of the CUNY Pathways Initiative, which is intended to assist students in transferring between CUNY institutions. This review has been strongly resisted on the Brooklyn campus; however, the process is moving forward.

In the undergraduate programs, there exists variability on the level of assessment of student learning outcomes. The Assessment Plan has articulated processes to regularize reporting, now inclusive of a program-level self-review to analyze where the programs believe they stand on a Likert-type scale from Initial/Needs Work to Highly Developed/Good Practice. Samples provided across several disciplines show that the programs appear to be strongest in learning outcomes and weakest in assessment plans, tools, and use of results. However, since this was a pilot study of the rubric this most recent year, these are areas that need to be tracked over time to see how these self-reported rankings improve over time.

Examples of department assessment still show a lack of closing the loop activities; these will need to be followed up with by the College in a systematic way. As an example, the “Closing the Loop” section from the History Department from 2013 denotes “the department’s Outcomes Assessment Committee analyzes the information and discusses it with the department in the first departmental meeting of each fall semester. The department will use the data to refine its curriculum and to inform discussions about pedagogy and strategic planning.” However, no evidence is provided of these discussions, or decisions made about pedagogy and strategic planning.

The Reviewers suggest that the College use the program-level self-analysis to define areas for professional development for academic, co-curricular, and administrative units alike with respect to assessment training and education.

VI. Linked Institutional Planning and Budgeting Processes

Brooklyn College’s Strategic Plan for 2011-2016 provides a comprehensive outline of institutional priorities and demonstrates how the College is aligning its goals and related budgetary decisions according to its mission, core values, assessment data and evolving external environment. The best examples of how resource allocation is linked to planning and assessment can be found in the PRR’s five case studies, which demonstrate action (including budgetary allocation) in response to institutional needs and planning. For example, case study #2, “Creating the Barry R. Feirstein Graduate School of Cinema,” and case study #3, “Seeking AACSB Accreditation for the Brooklyn College School of Business,” illustrate planning processes that identify clearly stated institutional needs and goals, engage participation of multiple representatives of the affected programs and point to complete cycle of assessment, planning and action. What is not entirely clear are the direct links between evidence, such as assessment documentation, and the final budgetary allocation decisions.

The Reviewers suggest that the College concentrate on articulating the direct links between evidence, such as assessment documentation, and final budgetary allocation decisions, in support of the strategic plan.
VII. Conclusion

Brooklyn College has evolved during the years since its most recent self-study, including new leadership, administrative structure, and academic structure. It has endured several major systemic and external challenges, including a new administrative computing system and an imposed core curriculum review and realignment. Throughout these challenges, many positive policies, practices, and guiding documents have emerged and the College has provided some evidence of their adoption and inclusion into the fabric of the institution.

In summary, the Reviewers will restate their recommendations and suggestions, which also appear earlier in this report:

- *The Reviewers recommend that the College determine the efficacy of the new graduate program review process. This should include an evaluation of the previously documented uneven quality of enrollment, mission alignment, functionality of the articulated learning outcomes assessment process, and systematic use of assessment data to impact curriculum planning, student learning, and resource allocation.*
- *The Reviewers recommend that the College assess and articulate the efficacy of the Assessment Plan with respect to implementation and systemic adoption of activities designated therein. This follow-up should include evidence of academic program, co-curricular unit, and administrative unit assessment.*
- *The Reviewers recommend that the College report on its efforts to create a greater consistency in the determination of credit hour assignments.*
- *The Reviewers suggest that the College use the program-level self-analysis to define areas for professional development for academic, co-curricular, and administrative units alike with respect to assessment training and education.*
- *The Reviewers suggest that the College concentrate on articulating the direct links between evidence, such as assessment documentation, and final budgetary allocation decisions, in support of the strategic plan.*