

Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students
Of
PROVIDENCE COLLEGE
Providence, Rhode Island

By

An Evaluation Team representing the
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
Of the
New England Association of Schools and Colleges

Prepared after study of the institution's
Self-evaluation report and a visit

October 22-25, 2017

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.

COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION
New England Association of Schools and College
Preface Page to the Team Report

Please complete during the team visit and include with the report prepared by the visiting team

- Name of Institution:** Providence College **Date form completed:** October 20, 2017
1. **History:** Year chartered or authorized: 1917 Year first degrees awarded: 1923
 2. **Type of control:** State City Religious Group; Specify: Roman Catholic (Dominican)
 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): Fall 2017

	Full-time	Part-time	FTE	Retention ^a	Graduation ^b	# Degrees ^c
Associate	0	6	1.8	Not applicable		5
Baccalaureate^d	3,668	131	3812.7	92.0%	84.2%	944*
Graduate	229	310	308.3	94.1%	89.4%	224

(a) full-time 1st to 2nd year (b) baccalaureate=2011 Cohort, Graduate=2014 Cohort (c) # of Degrees awarded from June 30th to July 1, 2017 as reported to IPEDS. *of these 944 graduates, 123 double-majored. (d) Does not include 370 full-time BA/BS students that are "Undeclared" Degree-Seeking students who are not in a specific program. (FTE=354.9)

5. Student debt:

	Most Recent Year	One Year Prior	Two Years Prior
Three-year Cohort Default Rate	1.9 (2014)	2.8 (2013)	2.0 (2012)
Three-year Loan Repayment Rate*	95.4% (Merged Data 14-15)	95.4% (Merged Data 13-14)	95.6% (Merged Data 12-13)

*Source: US Dept. of Education/College Scorecard Data; includes completers and non-completers.

	Associate	Baccalaureate	Graduate
Average % of graduates leaving with debt	N/A	70%	43%
Average amount of debt for graduates	N/A	\$39,000	\$37,000

- 6. Number of current faculty:** Undergrad Day: Full-time: 318 Part-time: 207* FTE: 387
 (includes 125 UG Day, 42 SCE, and 40 Graduate part-time faculty)

Revenues		Expenditures		
Tuition*	\$ 189.330	Instruction	\$ 62.117	
Gov't Appropriations	\$ 2.597	Research	\$ 0.792	
Gifts/Grants/Endowment	\$ 4.502	General**	\$ 34.680	
Auxiliary Enterprises	\$ 8.406	Auxiliary Enterprises	\$ 57.872	
Other	\$ 71.001	Other	\$ 37.916	
Total	\$ 203.415	Total	\$ 193.377	

* Gross Tuition (Net Tuition=116.909) **Includes Academic Support/Student Services/General

7. **Current fund data for most recently completed fiscal year:** (Specify year: FY17)
 (Double click in any cell to enter spreadsheet. Enter dollars in millions, e.g., \$1,456,200 = \$1.456)
8. **Number of off-campus locations:** N/A
 In-state _____ Other U.S. _____ International _____ Total _____
9. **Number of degrees and certificates offered electronically:** N/A
 Programs offered entirely on-line _____ Programs offered 50-99% on-line _____
10. **Is instruction offered through a contractual relationship?** No Yes
 Specify program(s): _____

Introduction

The Evaluation Team found members of the Providence College community very helpful before and during the October visit. Faculty and staff were knowledgeable about the process of accreditation, the purposes of the visit, and the development of the Self Study. There was broad participation in the Self Study process with a separate team working on each standard as well as a Steering Committee to bring the report together. Faculty, administrators, students, staff, and Board members were candid and thoughtful in their comments to Team members and also very dedicated to their institution.

The extensive and well documented Self Study has been most helpful to the Team. The Introduction lays out in detail developments at Providence College since 2007, the process for the Self Study, and the College's extensive work on five areas targeted by CIHE for special attention. The Team has also been assisted by a comprehensive body of College documents and information made available electronically. The most recent Strategic Plan adjustment expires in 2017, but the College has been scheduling completion of the next Strategic Plan to follow the Self Study and Evaluation Team report.

The Team held extensive conversations with members of the College community including five members of the Board. Team members met individually or in small groups with over 30 members of the administrative staff, over a dozen faculty leaders, as well as with student government leaders. In open meetings, the Team met with about 20 faculty, 70 staff members, and 15 students.

A review of College documents, before and during the Team visit, the chair's preliminary visit in September, and the Team's visit to campus October 22-25 have provided the basis for the information and evaluations contained in the nine sections of this report, which addresses the *Standards for Accreditation* of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

This evaluation of Providence College is a comprehensive evaluation following a report submitted and accepted in 2010 on the effectiveness of its faculty evaluation system and on the role of the College's mission in the faculty hiring process, and following the College's interim report submitted and accepted in 2012.

1. *Mission and Purposes*

Ever since its founding in 1917, Providence College has had a clearly articulated purpose of providing a high-quality education—defined by both Catholic-Dominican and liberal-arts values—to its students. The current Mission Statement continues to articulate these values. The Self Study provides a gloss for each dimension of the statement—the compatibility of faith

and reason, academic excellence, an inclusive community, and the ideal of *veritas* tied to the discovery of God's providence. The statement is visible in College publications and seems to underlie strategic planning and decision making at the College.

It is curious and slightly ironic that designing a new Mission Statement has been one of the more contentious processes in recent years at Providence College. Ironic because to the Evaluation Team almost everyone we met had a clear understanding of the "mission" of the College, and those understandings are by and large consistent with each other. That rather deep-seated understanding meaningfully connects, in support of student learning, the Dominican with the academic dimensions of the College's traditions.

On the other hand, the effort to design a new "Mission Statement" for the institution, the first revision since 1996, has been fraught with significant tensions. The Faculty Senate was unwilling, for several reasons, to endorse the version proposed by the Mission Statement Committee. The Board of Trustees finally decided a statement needed to be approved and voted to approve a version that was actually a compromise drafted by the President. Faculty members had voiced concerns about the lack of breadth, particularly the lack of lay faculty members, on the Mission Statement Committee, and about the connection between the Mission Statement and the process for hiring new faculty, particularly the requirement that candidates provide before visiting campus a statement about their sense of fit within the College community.

While Providence College undertook its Mission Statement revision partly because of a CIHE recommendation, it is not surprising that in a period of major change in higher education generally and at Providence College specifically these tensions surfaced despite a faculty and staff overwhelmingly supportive of the ongoing work at and the basic values of the College. This has been a time on campus of serious reflection on the compatibility of the Dominican and academic values, in the eyes of some two dimensions that are natural partners but for others two dimensions with tensions that must be addressed and that emerge, for example, in the processes for approving speakers, for achieving diversity goals, and for faculty hiring. It has also been a decade in which great increases in the percentage of Business majors, as collegial as the Business faculty are, has created unease about the "liberal arts" definition of Providence College. It has also been a time of change in the academic goals and professional priorities of newly recruited faculty members. All of this and more may underlie some of the tension about mission and shared governance that emerged during the process.

It must be added that the College over the last decade has invested heavily in all dimensions of its stated values. It has added, for example, staffing and programs related to ministry and Catholicism. It has built a Core Curriculum with strong academic goals and desired outcomes not disconnected from its Dominican character, although development of an adequate way to assess success of the Core remains a work in progress. It has approved student development goals (the Friar Four) that have the potential to enhance the Core Curriculum.

Moving forward it may well be that the College will want to follow the direction indicated in the Self Study. With leadership from the President, faculty would then work with administration and staff to define “how best to incorporate the mission into important decision-making processes” and the College would “develop a plan to regularly review the Mission Statement” that involves “all campus constituencies” and works “toward even broader consensus.” In any case, at this point in time the Mission Statement is not one of the hot topics on campus.

2. Planning and Evaluation

Planning: Providence College has experienced considerable success in recent years. Its enrollment numbers and finances are strong. It meets its admission targets and maintains a low discount rate of approximately 37% with nearly 40% of enrolling students paying the full amount for tuition, fees, room and board. The institution operates with an annual positive operating margin of at least 5%. It retains and graduates students at very high rates. It recently completed a highly successful capital campaign at \$185 million and has transformed the campus through nearly \$260 million of new construction and renovations. It continues to work to diversify its faculty, staff, and student body.

A strong case can be made that much of the College’s recent success can be attributed to its emphasis on planning. A Strategic Plan promulgated in 2011 was updated in 2015 for extension through 2017 and was aligned with the capital campaign. During the last seven years Providence College has sought to 1) advance the Catholic and Dominican mission of the College, 2) enhance academic excellence, 3) embrace diversity, 4) prepare students for lives of meaning and purpose, and 5) build lifelong relationships, grow financial resources, and increase institutional effectiveness. Metrics measuring the success of the implementation of strategic plans are accessible on the College’s website. A new strategic planning process was initiated in 2016 with the goal of having a new plan in place—PC200—in 2018 to guide the College in the first decade of its second century.

New structures have been put in place in order to facilitate planning and evaluation. The Executive Vice President/Treasurer serves as the institution’s chief planning officer, and an Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs serves as the chief institutional effectiveness officer. Board and Cabinet members are engaged in the planning and evaluation process. The College maintains a long-term budget model which spans a horizon of five to ten years.

As the process for developing PC200 got underway, two committees were formed, a strategic planning steering committee and a committee on the future of higher education. Both are broadly representative and committed to engaging as many stakeholders as possible in the planning process. Nearly one thousand members of the College community have contributed in one way or another to the current planning effort. The committee on the future of higher

education has pulled together an impressive collection of information the campus can use in considering future directions for the College.

Evaluation: Evaluation efforts at Providence College are robust and have been employed to inform decision making in several areas. A Continuous Improvement Program (CIP) was established in 2008-2009. To date, all but three academic departments have completed a self-study and external review process called for as part of the CIP effort. The College has employed external consultants as needed to supplement internal evaluations, and it participates in a number of external survey projects to help inform decision-making. These include the COACHE faculty survey out of Harvard, the CIRP project from UCLA, and the NSSE conducted by Indiana University. Information and data from academic dashboards, the common data set, an institutional fact book, *PC At-a-Glance*, as well as nearly two dozen campus-wide assessment instruments and reports are all available to support planning and evaluation initiatives. Information about assessment-related activities is shared through an assessment newsletter, “Assessment in Action”.

The institutional effectiveness function at the College includes staff dedicated to the work of accreditation, assessment, institutional research, planning, and program and unit review. In order to integrate and coordinate planning functions—financial, capital, strategic—a position for financial and strategic planning was recently added in the Division of Finance and Business. In addition, the Division of Student Affairs employs a Communications and Assessment Specialist.

Despite its success in planning and evaluation, the College community recognizes there is more to be done. It is important that PC200 be implemented in 2018, as a number of individuals noted that the lull between the current plan and the new plan has created a period of uncertainty about whether to pursue certain initiatives and where to commit resources. The campus awaits direction from the new plan. In the area of evaluation, most on campus know that the College must more fully close the loop in student learning outcome assessment, assess the impact of changes in the Core Curriculum, strengthen review of faculty and use of student course evaluations, resolve issues around graduate and continuing education, improve the use of technology platforms, and implement goals connected to diversity and inclusion.

3. Organization and Governance

Providence College was established through an act of incorporation by the General Assembly of Rhode Island in 1917. The charter distinguishes “a body corporate,” or corporation, a “subordinate board” to become the Board of Trustees, and “professors, tutors, instructors and other officers” of the college whose duties and responsibilities are determined by the corporation. The charter’s final provision maintains that “no person shall be refused admission

to said college as a student, nor shall any person be denied any of the privileges, honors or degrees of said college on account of the religious opinions he may entertain.” As the College moves to increase diversity of various sorts, it seems gratifying to recall that religious diversity is embedded in its founding document.

Governing Board: The Bylaws of Providence College stipulate that governance of the College is vested in the Corporation of the College and the Board of Trustees. The Corporation has well-defined duties, powers and privileges articulated in the Bylaws. The Board of Trustees is charged with all other aspects of governance. The lines of demarcation separating these bodies are clearly articulated, acknowledged, and respected. The bodies also operate effectively with one another to serve the College and advance its mission. All members of the Corporation are *ex officio* members of the Board of Trustees.

The Bylaws stipulate that the 12-member Corporation of the College must include the diocesan Bishop, the President of the College, the Provincial, the Chair of the Board of Trustees, four Dominicans, and four lay people. Because the President of the College must be a Dominican Friar but the Chair of the Board “shall preferably, but not necessarily, be a layperson,” the sponsoring religious order, together with the Bishop, ordinarily holds seven of the twelve seats on the Corporation with lay people occupying five. The governing document of the College therefore preserves the authority and culture of the Dominicans by ensuring their presence at the highest level.

Dominican Friars continue to have an active presence in campus life. The Vice President for Mission and Ministry informed us that an effort is underway to place even more Friars in faculty and staff positions. The presence of young Dominicans on campus distinguishes Providence College from other Catholic colleges whose orders’ members are older and less visible. It also signals the likelihood of a strong continuing presence going forward.

The Board has established twelve standing committees to conduct its business and is authorized to create other ad hoc committees as necessary. Although the work and purview of each committee is delineated in the Bylaws, this expansive committee structure results in extensive reporting out that may as a result delay effective action and communication. The Evaluation Team therefore finds merit in the intent of the Shared Governance Committee “to review College and Board Committees with an eye to consolidating them and making them more interdisciplinary” and to review their workload and purposes as soon as possible.

Since 2014, the Board has been actively engaged in instituting practices designed to improve the level of trust and foster communication between the Board and the faculty. The 2014 COACHE study precipitated this effort with its findings about shared governance and faculty mistrust in senior leadership. In response, the Board took a series of action steps meant to address the faculty perception that shared governance was not working and that communication from the administration was often ineffective.

First, the Board established a Shared Governance Committee, composed of three trustees, three senior administrators, and three faculty members, the latter nominated by the President of the Faculty Senate and approved by the President of the College. Establishing the committee validated the goal of shared governance. This committee meets at least three times a year, coinciding with Board meetings, and at other times when possible and necessary. The committee recently met for the 27th time in three years. The members have established cordial, even warm, working relationships with one another and have worked to advance the cause of shared governance. A consultant hired to research and present best practices proved disappointing, but committee members have made considerable progress on their own. The committee has spoken with unanimity on issues, and there is no evidence that this consensus has been achieved through either silencing minority voices or a reluctance to tackle major issues.

Second, upon the recommendation of the Shared Governance Committee, the Board has added faculty members to almost all Board committees. Trustees express enthusiasm for this change and amended the Bylaws to accommodate it. Since much of the work of the Board takes place in the committees, this development is significant for improving Board-faculty relations and communication.

Third, trustees have invited the President of the Faculty Senate, along with Cabinet members, to attend plenary Board meetings, and they have amended the Bylaws to also reflect this change. Whereas several years ago the Faculty Senate President was not permitted to address the Board on Faculty Senate's non-support of the Mission Statement, the current Faculty Senate President believes that would "never happen now."

Trustees communicate a high regard for faculty and are especially proud of the recent faculty appointments who seem to have strength in both teaching and research. Faculty members, however, and particularly probationary young faculty, find it increasingly difficult to balance work/life issues as they seek excellence as teachers and researchers but also at times have heavy advising loads and committee assignments.

Internal Governance: In response to concerns regarding communication within the context of shared governance, the President and his senior team have also taken steps to communicate more effectively within the College community. After every Board meeting the President debriefs administrators and faculty who work on Board committees and also, in a written statement to the campus community, outlines major activities and decisions of the Board. The President of Faculty Senate is also periodically invited to Cabinet meetings. The President and Provost have hosted open meetings with faculty at least once a semester since April 2015. The Provost reports monthly to the Faculty Senate on Cabinet activities and established the Provost's Advisory Committee in 2015. That group has met 15 times.

The President is considering some reorganization of his Cabinet. Currently, all vice presidents are members of the President's Senior Cabinet. Three vice presidents report to the President

(chief academic officer, chief financial officer, chief advancement officer), and three report to the Executive Vice President (chief student affairs officer, chief mission officer, general counsel). The Chief Diversity Officer in the future will also serve as a vice president and part of Cabinet.

Providence College has experienced significant change in the last ten years including transformation of the faculty. At times one part of the culture has yet to catch up with other parts. Reorganization of academic programs into four separate schools, for example, each with a dean reporting to the Provost, has resulted in frequent uncertainties about lines of authority and decision-making. Faculty members reported unhappiness over excessive trading in “faculty deals,” awarding of course reductions without transparency, inequitable advising loads without college-wide norms, privileging of some departments, and long lag times in response to requests. The budget process, since it seemed to take place entirely behind closed doors, also elicited a high level of concern from faculty members, who noted not only the lack of transparency but also the lack of explanations for budgets when they were finally distributed. On the other hand, faculty members are most grateful for their students and colleagues, for professional development opportunities, and for the development of an Office of Sponsored Research and Programs. They also do appreciate the high-quality leadership from the administration.

The transition to schools with deans has worked more effectively in some units than others. All but the School of Arts and Sciences are relatively small and coherent in purpose. The School of Business, with AACSB accreditation, has effectively established itself within the new structure under the Dean. Arts and Sciences, however, includes most of the institution’s faculty and the greatest diversity of disciplines natural for such a unit. In the past, Arts and Sciences departments may have enjoyed much autonomy, with a colleague serving as the only authority (Chair) under the Provost. Faculty members apparently have not yet developed an allegiance to the new School as distinct from Providence College overall.

Further, there seems to be some confusion as to when the Dean makes a certain decision or when the Provost does. Some faculty members say that a number of their colleagues do not comply with basic policies regarding assessment, course syllabi, and personnel review. These inconsistencies between departments affect morale and governance and faculty and senior administration will no doubt want to seek a solution to this challenge.

The College has made improvements in tenure and promotion processes and has linked the two decisions. Faculty remain concerned, however, that practices vary too much from department to department in terms of standards, mentoring, and procedures. The College may therefore want to review the composition and procedures of the Committee on Academic Rank and Tenure (CART), which have not been fully reviewed for quite some time.

Faculty morale appears better than it was five years ago. While seeking better communication and clearer shared governance, faculty members are generally quite content at Providence

College. They recognize the power they have for creating, offering, and eliminating curricula; and yet at other times they feel they have little role in decision making. Of course, they would like to see the College establish a salary level above the mid-point of their group, yet they recognize that benefits are good but would like to see them even better, for example in child care—if not a campus facility then some kind of support. Meanwhile staff members, aware of retirement buy-outs made available to faculty, regret that the same have not been available to staff.

Student Government: The main organization for student governance is the Student Congress. The president, vice president, treasurer, and secretary are annually elected by the student body. Each class elects its own officers and representatives to Student Congress annually. Student engagement seems to be healthy, and relationships between Student Congress and both the administration and the staff advisors seem to be good.

4. The Academic Program

The academic program at Providence College includes many strong and healthy majors. It has been impacted in recent years by changes at the College to which everyone is still adjusting: the shift to a structure with four schools each with its own dean, the recruitment of a whole new generation of faculty, and approval of a new Core Curriculum as the foundation of a Providence College education. The new School of Business and the growing popularity of its programs among students have raised identity issues for some faculty and staff who define the institution as a liberal arts college. It has also been a challenge to align the four schools with regard to assessment and evaluation.

The newly revised Core Curriculum is designed to provide crucial framing questions for all undergraduates. It is based on nine “mission-related goals” or learning outcomes. Three of these cover common learning expectations for undergraduates—proficient writing, oral communication, and reasoning skills. The remainder cover priorities related to the College’s mission, for example, “compatibility of faith and reason,” “moral and ethical reasoning,” an “awareness and understanding of other cultures, societies and creeds,” and “civic engagement and responsibility.” The Core Curriculum therefore provides “the heart and soul of a Providence College education.”

The Development of Western Civilization Program (DWC) is considered a “signature element of the Core.” In a recent revision, the four-course survey of the Western Canon was revised into three courses with a colloquium as the fourth. That was added so that broader questions could extend the canonical studies into the disciplines covered in the majors, and also so that questions could be raised that connect the Core with the more diverse student body and faculty being recruited.

Staff closely involved with the growing multicultural population, however, shared findings from students of color who feel they are rendered invisible by the Core Curriculum and that the colloquia do not really address this concern. Overall on campus there are strong feelings on both sides of the issue. Some persons defend the current “Western Civ” definition of the DWC against dilution, while others argue that the College cannot be true to its diversity commitment without opening up its core to more broadly representative materials. The Team was struck, nonetheless, by the opportunities for solving this problem that the College has as it prepares a new strategic plan, celebrates its first century, and tries to maximize the benefit brought by some of its new populations. Because the Core and the DWC are at the heart of a Providence College education—even inspiring the design and construction of the main teaching building, Ruane Center—these opportunities could well be taken up by the leadership of the College.

An additional challenge involves advising into the Core. The understanding of the Core and its purposes among students and faculty is spotty, and so there seems to be an unclear pattern of advising for new students who need a firm grounding in what is a complex Core. Those new students who arrive in the summer for preparatory work seem to have a better pathway to this understanding via the Friar Foundations (bridge) and Transitions programs, but the majority of students lack that advantage. One suggestion made was for extension of a First Year Seminar to include all incoming students, with part of the curriculum for the course being devoted to grounding new students in the expectations and importance of the Core. Faculty members, however, acknowledged in several meetings that the question of just how the Core Curriculum is at the “heart and soul of a Providence College” education is rarely, if ever, addressed once the students leave the sequence and begin work in earnest on their majors.

It is also difficult to assess some of the items in the nine Core goals. Critical and quantitative reasoning skills, like written and oral communication, can be assessed through nationally recognized tools. But skills like decision making, relationship building, and essential thinking require more coordinated qualitative, as well as quantitative, assessments than are apparent in the program, and “closing the loop” in order to use findings to improve the program presents even more of a challenge. It should be added that a number of staff and faculty expressed disappointment that students too often approach the Core with a “check the box” mentality unrelated to the intentions of the program. It also seemed that faculty investment in the Core is inconsistent except among those directly involved in teaching it. Many students seem to see the Core as a chore not related to their personal choice of a major. Some departments seem reluctant to release faculty to teach in the Core because of a lack of resources to provide replacement teaching.

The remaining credits in the Core are distributed: six in Theology, six in Philosophy, three each in social science, quantitative reasoning, fine arts, and natural science. Two courses must be writing-intensive, one oral-communication-intensive, one devoted to civic engagement, and one providing a dimension of diversity. Completion of the Core requires that students also

fulfill a Core Focus, consisting of two courses in an approved area, such as Foreign Language, not necessarily connected to a student's major.

The School of Business: The School of Business, accredited in 2012 by AACSB, has attracted a large and growing number of students every year. With a collegial and well-regarded faculty, its rapid and continuing growth in students nonetheless inspires controversy within a College staff and faculty very committed to the liberal arts identity of the College. Last year, 39 per cent of the graduating class had majors in the School of Business, and there is no question that the attractiveness of a strong Business program within a Catholic and liberal arts context is a major reason for the College's recent success. The majority of faculty and staff, moreover, seem committed to making the program part of the institution's trademark rather than finding ways to reduce its numbers. Still, the School has only 43 of the 276 faculty positions, with implications for issues like advising and teaching loads.

The School of Business offers undergraduate students four majors—Finance, Accountancy, Marketing, and Management. Each is well designed to promote increasing expertise leading to a capstone seminar in which students demonstrate some measure of independent learning. Internships are offered to students as is an independent project option leading to production of a signature work. The majors are fully correlated with the liberal arts foundation at the base of a Providence College education. Syllabi reflect this alignment, as does the language describing the majors online.

The School also offers students the chance to earn an MBA with a concentration in accountancy, finance, international business, management, or marketing. The required core is management-based and consistent with best practices at similar institutions. The program requires full-time work experience, commensurate with the expectations of the program, or the completion of an appropriate internship. A thesis is not required but may substitute for two elective courses.

The School of Arts and Sciences: The largest of the four schools, the School of Arts and Sciences offers 41 undergraduate majors, 30 minors, and four certificate programs. It also offers five master's-level programs in History, Teaching Mathematics, Biblical Studies, Theological Studies, and Theology. The offerings are well suited to the expertise of the sponsoring departments, although, as noted in the Self Study, Providence College does need to address more strategically in PC200 the role of graduate studies in the institution.

The School of Arts and Sciences includes just about all of the traditional liberal arts disciplines in the institution as well as a number of interdisciplinary programs. Its mission is closely connected to the overall mission of Providence College. Given the range of fields in the School and its tradition of departments operating somewhat independently under the Provost, it has had difficulty both developing an identity as a separate school and aligning all the departmental practices with regard to syllabi, course assessments, student outcome assessments, and

personnel practices. Given all those challenges, nonetheless, the Team was impressed by the high quality of the teaching and learning taking place in programs in the School.

The School of Continuing Education: While the School of Continuing Education offers its students a lighter version of the DWC (nine credits) and proficiency courses in several other areas such as civic/global engagement, information literacy, and collaboration and teamwork, the overall direction and mission of the school seemed to the Team to be diffuse. It has had a traditional role of providing opportunities to adults returning to school after a period of time and to associate degree holders wishing to work towards a bachelor degree. It offers bachelor degrees in several areas like Liberal Studies and History, and also associate degrees in Administrative Management and Liberal Studies. In its PC200 strategic planning process, the College may want to reconsider how best to fulfill this community-focused purpose within the structure of the College.

The School of Professional Studies: The School of Professional Studies offers four undergraduate courses of study in the fields of Education, Social Work, and Health Policy and Management, as well as seven graduate degree programs ranging from Education to fields tied to the College's Catholic mission. Most programs have an experiential component and all have comprehensively mapped programs of study for all students, undergraduate and graduate. The program descriptions clearly emphasize that they are designed to assimilate students within a professional field. These graduate programs will surely be part of the College's strategic assessment of the direction it wants to take in graduate studies overall.

Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit

The program offerings of Providence College and its current policy on the award of credit follow closely the guidelines endorsed by the Commission. "A credit hour requires the equivalent of one classroom hour of 50 minutes or a laboratory period of one to four hours per week throughout the term, as well as at least two hours of out-of-class student work for each hour in class." Conversations with faculty at the Core and major levels reinforced the sense to the Team that the claim in the Self Study that the Commission's "guidelines are reinforced continually" is accurate. This was also borne out in our study of syllabi for both traditional classroom courses and for more interactive courses like the Core colloquia. Work in lower-level classes was appropriately differentiated from more specialized work required in upper-level classes or graduate classes.

5. Students

Admissions: In a market of declining demographics, Providence College experienced a 2.5% increase in enrollment in its Fall 2016 entering cohort resulting in a total head count of 4,270

full-time undergraduate students. Included in this total are 17% of students with distinct identities: Asian (13), Black or African American (40), Hispanic/Latino (112), Native American/Alaskan Native (2), Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander (2), and students with two or more racial identities (14). The goal now is to increase this diversity to 18%. The number of applications from students in these groups has increased from 1,845 for the Class of 2016 to 2,412 for the Class of 2020. The Office of Admissions reports a total applicant pool of 10,820 this past year with an acceptance rate of 55% and a yield rate of 17.7%. The goal for yield is 20%.

Enrollment success is attributed in part to the emphasis in the admissions process on a student's ability to succeed academically on campus from entry to completion. It is also due to transformation of the physical campus, continued investment in building the New England applicant pool despite decreasing populations, and the experience a family has when visiting campus. The "spirit" of Providence College is, according to persons the Team interviewed, deeply evident to these prospective families during their interactions with students, faculty, and staff. The Office of Admission works closely with staff from the Financial Aid Office. The College has a goal of meeting 100% of need and is now at about 81%. Professionals in Financial Aid work with families so they understand the financial commitment of a four-year experience at Providence.

Although a Division I athletic institution, the College uses an athlete admission process similar to that for non-athletes. Coaches enlist Admissions counselors early in the process to review applications of each potential student athlete. The goal of the Athletic Department is that there be a 100% completion rate for all student athletes.

Standards for admission help ensure that students have the qualifications compatible with institutional objectives. Applications are reviewed holistically to assess a candidate's overall readiness for the College, but also the potential to evolve into responsible and productive citizens. Criteria include academic preparation and strength of curriculum, test scores when submitted, service and leadership record, and intangible interpersonal factors.

Graduate and Continuing Education admissions processes are handled independently through each program. The total Graduate program headcount in 2016 was 534, with 214 of those being full-time. Continuing Education admissions are more open and provide for enrollment of non-degree and certificate students.

Student Services and Co-curricular Experiences: Providence College offers all of the standard services and co-curricular experiences expected at such an institution. As outlined in the Self Study, these include a strong residence life program, health and personal counseling services, student leadership development, community and citizenship opportunities, career education, both intercollegiate and intramural athletic programs, and transitional programs.

Two promising new programs, Friar Foundations and Transition Programs, are bridge-type programs that connect new students with the campus during the summer. "Friar Foundations"

graduates its first group next spring and boasts a 94% retention rate. The Providence Student Congress and student government provide numerous opportunities for student leadership. The Office of the Chaplain provides significant support for a number of students including non-Catholics.

The Division of Student Affairs has established divisional learning and developmental outcomes that relate to the overall mission of the College. Three assistant or associate vice presidents are responsible for creating, implementing, and assessing initiatives steeped in the four pillars of the Friar Four. Student Affairs staff also plan to connect the Friar Four more closely with the Core Curriculum learning goals in order to benefit the overall student experience at Providence College.

The College offers a strong array of support services through the Office of Academic Services, which includes the Writing Center and Tutoring Center. These units work with all students but also have focused services for athletes, international students, and those with special learning needs. The College, moreover, has hired a Director of International Student Success and a Director of Multicultural Student Success.

The College's efforts to prevent sexual misconduct and to educate students about it reach campus-wide and are under the leadership of the Title IX Coordinator, who currently is also the Assistant Vice President for Student Development and Compliance. Faculty and staff who support students through the Title IX processes on campus, the Deputy Title IX Coordinators, are well trained and ensure the integrity of the processes in place.

In 2012, with a College commitment to having greater diversity, an Office of Institutional Diversity was established and a Chief Diversity Officer hired. That office supports diverse student populations directly, and also indirectly, through student and faculty initiatives. These include the Inclusive Pedagogy Project, which aims to help develop new pedagogies designed for a more inclusive population and to make sure that the community better understands the implications of having a more diverse campus community. While students at Providence College by and large are dedicated to the College and the education it provides, there is an important part of the student population that still struggles to find a place for themselves at Providence College.

6. Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship

Faculty and Academic Staff: Five types of faculty contracts are offered at Providence College: Ordinary Faculty, which comprise the academic faculty at all ranks; Professional Faculty, which includes personnel in the Library and those under the Dean of Undergraduate and Graduate Studies; Term Faculty, those on limited-term contracts; Practitioner Faculty in the School of Business; and Special Faculty, which includes scholars in residence and research associates. As

of Fall 2017 there are 276 Ordinary Teaching Faculty out of 318 full-time Teaching Faculty. Twenty-four of those in these groups are Dominicans.

Tenure and Promotion: Approximately sixty percent of the faculty body are new over the past twelve years, and the change has had a major impact on the College. By and large the new faculty members receive glowing reviews from their senior colleagues and are said to be setting new standards in both teaching and scholarship. Representatives from the Committee on Academic Rank and Tenure (CART) noted increases in the volume of high quality peer-reviewed publications being generated by junior faculty. They implied that while this has been accompanied by a high rate of approval for tenure, it has implicitly changed the standards for promotion to Full Professor and resulted in fewer successful cases there. The College may therefore want to consider how to provide some balance for the trajectories of the more senior faculty members. The College seems open to multiple kinds of research and scholarship, but there appears to be little consensus around campus as to just what expectations are.

There is an expected balance among teaching, research, and service. A number of faculty members indicated that they believe a rebalancing has recently taken place to support both high-level research and pedagogical innovation. They are not sure, however, whether this adjustment has been intentional and in line with institutional priorities or has simply resulted from an incremental evolution as the nature of the tenure cases has changed. At the same time, with increased expectations have come challenges for balancing work and life. Further conversation could help to clarify all this for everyone on campus.

The traditional culture at Providence College seems to include some balance between departmental autonomy in setting standards and basic institutional expectations in all three areas. Broad tenure and promotion expectations are laid out in the Faculty Handbook, but specific policies about mentorship, definitions of excellence, and the use of external letters of evaluation are detailed separately by each department. As noted in the Self Study and previously in this report, there is concern within the faculty about the level of inconsistency among the departments. To address these concerns, 1) the College has implemented a comprehensive third-year review for all pre-tenure faculty; 2) the Faculty Senate has recommended that external letters be sought at tenure-decision time for all faculty; 3) tenure and promotion have been linked; and 4) CART has undertaken a review of all departmental documents on tenure and promotion to improve alignment, clarity, and transparency. There remain, though, inconsistencies related to the role of advising, the practice of mentoring, the use of teaching evaluations, and the allocation of course reductions.

According to the Office of the Provost, 37% of faculty receive course reductions during any given semester from the standard 3/3 load. Interestingly some of these faculty then receive overload pay for teaching an added course. Some faculty seemed aware of such practices; others were unaware and expressed concern about equity and asked why some forms of teaching justified reductions and others did not. This, too, appears to be an area where additional conversations may be needed to improve transparency as well as consistency. The

work that has already taken place will help support the implementation of the post-tenure review process planned for all faculty.

Faculty Development: Providence College has made significant improvements in faculty development over the past decade. Many faculty members applauded the addition of the Office of Sponsored Research and Programs, which has effectively negotiated an indirect cost-share agreement to distribute indirect costs from external grants in an equitable way among units. The office has also developed an Intellectual Property Policy approved by administration and faculty. The College now also offers faculty Development/Discretionary Funds of \$2,200 (for travel, annually) and \$1,000 (for discretionary, every two years) and administers funds on a competitive basis through the Committee on Aid to Faculty Research (CAFR). Those funds, for example, can support purchase of equipment and supplies as well as support student research.

Diversity: The College has made investments to support its diversity efforts, which have yielded positive results in hiring a more diverse faculty. This growth has created challenges for mentorship, since faculty of color have access to fewer colleagues who share their background and experiences. As mentors and mentees often gravitate to people like themselves, this seems to be resulting in people of color being less integrated in informal departmental networks and therefore more isolated. To address this challenge, the Provost has joined the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity and has committed the College to a more balanced and consistent mentorship across departmental lines. Faculty did note that faculty development opportunities related to diversity are not well attended, a problem which may reflect a general lack of understanding of what something like inclusive pedagogy actually means.

Teaching and Learning: There are robust offerings through the Center for Engaged Learning, the Center for Teaching Excellence, and the Writing Center. Each year, the Center for Engaged Learning offers more and more opportunities for rich off-campus and research experiences to enhance academic coursework and career preparation. The Library is also a strong partner in teaching and scholarship, serving as a repository for faculty and student work and as a key digital humanities ally. The Faculty Development Council is currently working to coordinate faculty development activities and strengthen learning opportunities for all faculty.

7. Institutional Resources

Human Resources: Human resources policies for faculty and staff are readily available on the department's website as are current benefits along with links to vendors providing additional benefit information. Compensation studies have been performed by an external consultant within the last three years. The College has set a goal of compensating faculty and staff in a range from 80% to 120% of the median of a group of peer institutions selected by a faculty

committee. The administration believes it is meeting this goal with a few exceptions. The compensation studies also revealed that faculty benefits were slightly above average and staff benefits at the average. Staffing levels were noted to be lean in some areas of the College to include IT and HR. Faculty and staff have bodies which regularly review compensation and make recommendations to administration. Some employees are represented by unions negotiating on their behalf.

The College recently moved to an online evaluation form which staff believe has streamlined the evaluation process. Some staff expressed confusion about the linkage of merit pay to evaluation ratings, as there appears to them to be no clear connection between ratings and percentage increases in pay that may result from discretion on the part of vice presidents. It also appears that decisions on raises are not always shared with supervisors. Tenure-track Faculty members are evaluated intensively at the three-year mark and then again at tenure-decision time. The Business School has a post-tenure review process, and the College plans to extend the process to its other faculty.

An external consultant recently recommended that the Department of Human Resources transition from traditional transaction processing to a more robust role offering more support to the workforce to advance the institution's mission. The report noted that offering richer development opportunities for line staff and managers, and working to foster a culture of internal consultancy by the Department of Human Resources, would help offices and working groups realize more of their human potential and would increase institutional effectiveness. The College does provide relatively generous funding for professional development opportunities for faculty and staff.

Financial Resources: The College is admittedly dependent on students for over 80% of its annual revenue. Its net tuition revenue per student, however, is at enviable levels in an era when many comparable institutions face lower enrollments and declines in pricing power. The College's relative pricing power combines with the meeting of admissions targets to generate healthy operating surpluses on both the cash and the Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) bases of accounting.

These surpluses, coupled with careful borrowing, have allowed Providence College to transform its campus through the strategic purchase of a street dividing the campus and to build a new home for its School of Business as well as the new Ruane Center for the Humanities. In addition to renovating other buildings, the College has increased the appeal and accessibility of its campus through significant investment in landscaping, athletic fields, and parking, much of which has been moved to the campus periphery. One result has been a reduction in the dollar values of deferred maintenance.

Despite borrowing \$46.4 million in March 2017 to fund the renovation and expansion of the science complex and a student services center, as well as the expansion of career development space and construction of a basketball practice facility and several infrastructure

improvements, the College maintained its A2 bond rating from Moody's, who assigned it a stable outlook in its March 6, 2017 rating action. Moody's noted that, "The stable outlook acknowledges the College's stable student demand. . .and that it also incorporates expectations of accelerated financial reserve growth due to the winding down of a period of intensive capital investment."

The institution uses a ten-year stress-tested financial plan, which employs assumptions derived from historical results. Providence College is also considering the feasibility of establishing an ambitious goal to double its endowment to over \$400 million by 2028. The College would seek to reach this goal through a more assertive management of investments, careful control of investment fees, and continual additions to the endowment through reinvestment of operating surpluses and the solicitation of contributions.

The College's budget priorities appear to derive directly from its strategic plan. However, due to the prior strategic plan ending in 2017 and the new plan not yet having been approved, a pause has appeared in a heretofore disciplined application of funding to strategic initiatives in direct support of mission. The campus is looking expectantly to approval of the new plan, PC200, in 2018.

The College's Shared Governance Committee has recommended greater transparency and also more participation by faculty in the development of annual budgets. While faculty and staff participate in developing departmental budgets, the College budget process takes place within a fairly closed system involving senior leadership and the Board. Faculty often voice frustration over inadequate communications about capital and operating budget allocations.

The budget contains a healthy contingency and provides for regular operating surpluses, which are invested either in the physical plant or the endowment. The College's financial management is keenly aware of the desirability of intergenerational equity and the need to invest in the academic and co-curricular programs and facilities in order to continue providing great value to students. The institution has active and separate audit, finance, investment, and property committees of the Board, each contributing to a well-scrutinized system which produces financial statements attested to by an independent accounting firm.

Fundraising efforts have led to the completion of a capital campaign which saw \$185 million raised on a goal of \$140 million. Discussions with the Institutional Advancement Office provided evidence of a strong connection between fund-raising strategies and institutional objectives. This success seems to have resulted, in part, from new investments in staffing as well as clear goals and strong management.

Information, Physical and Technological Resources: As a result of major capital investment, the College clearly has the physical resources to carry out its mission. Regarding Information Technology resources, the College has invested the funds necessary to purchase software and hardware, which the Team saw during tours of the Library and classroom buildings, and discussed with College personnel. The College uses well established vendors for its major

software packages and hardware purchases. The College, however, does acknowledge that its staff is spread thin in this area. It also finds itself at something of a crossroads as individual departments seek to increase their effectiveness by purchasing stand-alone, best-of-breed software packages which may or may not tie into the legacy ERP system, Banner. While these departmental packages may offer superior workflows, they are only able to store data specific to the individual department's constituent. The ERP is still the only system that stores data college-wide, but it seems to lack the capacity to be tailored to provide the advanced services now needed by various departments. This development, that poses a significant challenge for Providence College, could benefit from campus-wide deliberations.

8. Educational Effectiveness

Since its last Self Study, Providence College has devoted significant resources and effort to assessing student learning in and out of the classroom. This effort and the results, seen in changes to policies, practices, and curricula, provide evidence of commendable progress toward a comprehensive assessment system. An Institutional Effectiveness staff of five, led by the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, has a substantial budget for supporting this work. The office addresses student success at the institutional, program, and course levels, and also administers multiple surveys, promotes annual assessment reporting by departments, and oversees the Continuous Improvement Program (CIP) for academic units. The staff are also available to advise faculty on assessment and uses an internal website to communicate with the College on methods and results of assessment initiatives.

At the same time, the College recognizes there is more to be done. Assessment at the program and course levels remains uneven. Communication of learning goals to faculty and staff is inconsistent. Faculty and staff are not always aware of the resources available; and there is a gap between design of instruments and collection of data on the one hand, and understanding of the actual impact on student learning on the other.

Standard of Achievement: The nine institution-wide learning goals developed along with the new Core Curriculum are noted on several sites. They are linked to both the College's Catholic-Dominican and its liberal-arts values. The Core Curriculum's course and proficiency requirements are then linked to those learning goals. Although these goals and proficiencies are quite accessible, the Team found that faculty and student awareness of them was not strong outside of those faculty and staff who were involved in developing them. Communicating more effectively what these goals are, and why they are important, is becoming an important item on the College's agenda.

Some, but not all, programs have articulated learning goals. Learning goal development is part of a required annual assessment report process, but not all departments have yet complied. All

departments in Business have complied, 90% in Professional Studies, and 83% in Arts and Sciences. Business and professional programs also benefit from having learning outcomes to meet the expectations of external accrediting bodies such as AACSB and the Rhode Island Department of Education. Learning goals are, however, not easily found on the College website and ways of making them more accessible, particularly to prospective students or parents, should be considered.

Based on a review of sample syllabi, the Team found that, statements of learning objectives at the course level are not consistently included. Almost all courses in Business and Professional Studies include such statements, but only 45 of the 83 syllabi from Arts and Sciences do so with differences between departments. For example, only two of the four syllabi for DWC courses that the Team studied include such statements. The Self Study notes that graduate programs lag behind undergraduate programs in assessment activities, but the School of Continuing Education does have an assessment plan that includes identified learning goals. On balance, the Team found that the College has done significant work in providing clear statements about student learning objectives, and that it does have plans for addressing the current inconsistencies in practice.

In addition to learning goals for the curriculum, Providence College has developed a set of co-curricular goals, “The Friar Four.” These include human flourishing, cultural agility, contemplation and communication, and integrated learning. Student Affairs staff are clearly committed to not only measuring student growth towards the goals, but also to connecting the goals to the College’s academic goals. While student leaders seem quite aware of the goals and their importance, other students are less so.

Assessment: Although the learning objectives are ambitious and at times difficult to measure, the College has made impressive progress on assessment through multiple methods of gauging success. These range from externally normed surveys such as the ETS PP and NSSE, to the application of rubrics in the Wabash Project, to the use of e-portfolios. For the Core Curriculum, the College is assessing student writing, oral communication, and deep reading. The College employed a Wabash-adapted “Openness to Diversity and Challenge Scale” to assess diversity and inclusiveness learning by students, as part of its assessment of the Core’s diversity proficiency.

The College has used ETS PP and NSSE in creative ways to measure incoming students’ communication and critical thinking abilities. This allows for some comparison of freshman capacities to those of seniors. The Self Study candidly admits the dissatisfaction some have about the difficulty in measuring the magnitude of student gains, though there is also some uncertainty about what would be legitimate expectations. Faculty members and faculty committees participate in much of this planning along with the Institutional Effectiveness group, but “closing the loop” to assure continual improvement remains a work in progress.

Program review has also resulted in some changes. The AoL (Assurance of Learning) process employed by the School of Business has led to positive curricular changes, and the Continuous Improvement Program (CIP) has encouraged several departments to make curricular improvements. Using NSSE and the Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI), the College learned that students give lower ratings to their academic advisors than students in relevant comparison groups. In response to promote needed change, the College hired a Director of Academic Advising to implement a more developmental approach to advising; founded a Center for Engaged Learning that collaborates with advisors to help students build meaningful co-curricular experiences; and created a pilot First Year Experience (FYE) to help students reflect on their educational goals and navigate the at-times complex curriculum. The Team found support among faculty for making FYE a permanent offering available to all first-year students.

It is, of course, harder to measure the extent to which the CIP process is also increasing faculty understanding of student learning, particularly in the DWC program because of their resistance to questions about the curriculum and the pressure for change. Given student uncertainty about the goals of the DWC sequence, this represents a challenge for the College. At the course-level, as noted earlier, the majority of departments make regular use of the assessment instruments available for student course ratings, but some departments remain resistant to the use of such evaluations.

Retention and Graduation Rates: Whatever the inconsistencies in current assessment practices, Providence College is retaining and graduating students at levels that many institutions would envy. For the class of 2016, the retention rate was 91% and the four-year graduation rate was 84%. The retention rate for the class of 2020 is 92%. Given the College's commitment to diversity, it is noteworthy that for the Class of 2016 the four-year graduation rate for white students was 83.6%, for students of color 84.1%. First-generation students had an 87.4% graduation rate, compared to 83.9% for other students. Students with over \$30,000 of financial need graduated at an 84.3% rate, compared to 87.0% for students with no need. To be sure, students with Pell grants graduate at rates between 73% and 77%, lower than other groups but still strong. The Data First forms reflect consistently high graduation and retention rates for populations the College sees as important to its mission.

Additional Measures of Student Success: Providence College tracks several additional measures of post-graduation success and satisfaction, including employment, licensure pass rates, enrollment in graduate and professional schools, receipt of prestigious fellowships and of doctoral degrees, and involvement in service. It also tracks "destination" survey results for its graduate students and Continuing Education students as well. To understand the perceived long-term value of a Providence College education, the College has started to conduct in-depth interviews with alumni who are multiple years and decades beyond their graduation year.

These additional measures tell a generally positive story. Graduates log a high number of service hours (18,274 for 836 respondents in the fall of 2016), consistently pass licensure exams

at rates close to 100%, and one year out report being employed or in graduate school at a rate of over 90%. The Self Study indicates the College now is trying to define alumni goals and determine how to analyze the results of alumni surveys. It has also hired a full-time Fellowship Coordinator to identify and mentor potential national fellowship recipients.

Overall, Providence College is demonstrably committed to assessment efforts, engages in multiple initiatives, and is beginning to use the results effectively to improve programs. The Institutional Effectiveness team has a clear agenda for evaluation and for educating the campus on its purposes to achieve campus-wide buy-in.

9. Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure

Providence College is a mission-driven institution. It strives to remain true to its Catholic-Dominican heritage and to operate in an ethical and transparent way. A wealth of readily accessible information is made public and available for students, prospective students, faculty, staff, governing board, external agencies and organizations, and the general public. The College operates under a Charter granted by the Rhode Island General Assembly in 1917 and abides by state and federal regulations. The College is accredited by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (CIHE/NEASC) and adheres to standards of the Commission.

Faculty, Student, and Staff Handbooks are all online and readily available. Policies and procedures are reviewed and updated as necessary. Grievance procedures are in place. The College adheres to the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) Statement on Professional Ethics and endorses the 1940 AAUP Statement on Academic Freedom and Tenure. The Office of Sponsored Research and Programs oversees training on ethical conduct of research and reviews College research programs on ethical issues.

A consumer information page is maintained, pursuant to requirements of the Higher Education Act (HEA). All information appears to be truthful and accurate. An institutional *Fact Book* is on the website as is a link to a *Fast Facts* tab. A notice directs interested parties on how to access audited financial statements.

Providence College has policies, practices, guidelines, and protocols that govern access to, as well as retention and disposal of, educational records. The College complies with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), and FERPA information is a focus of orientation programming. Students are informed annually of their privacy-related rights. Policies and guidelines are accessible via the Student Handbook, the catalogue, and the College's website.

EthicsPoint's secure server is deployed as a means for community members to provide anonymous web and phone-based reporting of concerns related to compliance issues and possible unethical behavior. As part of the College's efforts to embrace diversity and inclusiveness, the College's Notice of Non-Discrimination was amended in 2013. The College also revised its Anti-Harassment and Discrimination Policy and Grievance Procedures and has increased training in this area.

Like other institutions, Providence College has been wrestling of late with policies related to inviting and approving outside speakers on campus, and an Outside Speaker Policy was developed and put in place. The College, however, is still making adjustments as it strives to fully implement the plan.

The Division of Marketing and Communications is taking a more active role in reviewing, fact-checking, and approving information, communication materials, and social media content representing the College that is distributed by various offices.

Despite its ongoing commitment to integrity, transparency, and public disclosure, Providence College knows it is not without its challenges. The challenges, however, are no different from those faced by similar institutions. Efforts are under way to ensure that information is updated regularly, to make sure that members of the campus community are better informed about new policies and revisions of policies, and to involve all appropriate parties in the process of policy development. In addition, search features on the College's website are being enhanced to improve functionality and make finding information less cumbersome. Recent changes include creating easier access to audited financial statements; improving website accessibility for people with disabilities; and making information on length of time to degree for students, licensure pass rates, and student debt and loan repayment rates more readily accessible. To address some of these issues, some staff have suggested that the College may want to consider developing a single landing page for Higher Education Act (HEA) Information rather than relying on the use of links to other sites, especially since seeking some information currently requires a large number of "clicks."

Affirmation of Compliance

To document the College's compliance with Federal regulations relating to Title IV, the team reviewed the College's Affirmation of Compliance form signed by the President. Providence College discloses in its relevant publications, as well as on its website, the policy on transfer of credit as well as the list of institutions with which it has articulation agreements. Public notification of the visit of the Evaluation Team, and of the opportunity for public comment, was made a month or so prior to the visit by the College in the *Providence Journal*, the student newspaper, and the electronic alumni newsletter, and on the College's website. Grievance procedures for students, staff, and faculty, which are included in each of the three *Handbooks*, are publicized or distributed near the beginning of each semester. While online offerings are not extensive, the College utilizes unique login credentials to verify student identity. As discussed in Standard 4: *The Academic Program*, a review of course syllabi and schedules found the assignment of credit consistent with the Commission's standards and the College's policies.

Summary

Providence College has used the decade between accreditation reviews as well as the Self Study process to review and improve several key aspects of its programs and procedures. In the five areas indicated by CIHE for emphasis, the College has made significant investment of resources and time even if most staff and faculty would agree that some of these initiatives remain works in progress: revisions to the Mission Statement, the faculty evaluation system, enhancing financial resources, comprehensive assessment of student learning with focus on the Core Curriculum, and achieving goals for diversity.

It is the view of the Evaluation Team that Providence College is offering academic programs and support services consistent with its mission and of generally high quality. The College has recently reached or exceeded expectations in enrollment, even without turning to wait lists. It has maintained a low discount rate and recruited a large number of full-paying students. It has enviable retention and graduation rates of around 90 per cent without achievement gaps for minority students or athletes. In fact, Athletics seems well integrated in the College, working well with Admissions and Academics so that Division I sports can be an asset to the campus culture and for overall marketing.

While Providence College continues to be concerned that its endowment of about \$221 million, as of June 30, 2017, is low in relation to its peers and that the College is still tuition-dependent, its overall financial situation is excellent because of enrollment and a highly successful capital campaign that was planned for \$140 million and ended up at \$185 million. Capital construction

costing over \$230 million has included new humanities, business, and science facilities. Deferred maintenance is not a major issue.

The College has also been able to recruit a strong new generation of faculty members committed to their students but with serious scholarly ambitions as well, and it has recruited some excellent new administrators. It has improved its diversity numbers for students, faculty, and staff, but it has not yet fully dealt with the consequences of that increase, particularly by addressing how the institution can be changed for the better by such inclusiveness and by providing training for staff to achieve that inclusiveness.

The College seems to have improved its faculty evaluation processes but still is wrestling with the best way to embed post-tenure review in the system, and its overall success is hampered by inconsistencies among departments related to faculty-review processes. College-wide communication continues to be a challenging problem. At times, concerns involve dissatisfaction among faculty about transparency, for example on College budgeting and decisions about workloads. At times, the concerns revolve around what seems to be unclear communication from senior administrators about new policies or College issues.

A Committee on Shared Governance, involving faculty and administrators and Board members, is having some success in defining and improving the role and influence of faculty in College governance. The Team hopes that this committee continues to have a positive impact. On the other hand, it seemed to the Evaluation Team that the College has a surprisingly large number of committees of many kinds, and the Team wondered if faculty and administration might profit from an overall review of the committee structure in relation to both work load and purpose.

The College has recently moved to a system of deans of its academic units, but the resulting units widely vary. Often, concerns were expressed to the Evaluation Team by faculty that the role and authority of deans, in relation to chairs and the Provost, are not generally understood. The College may want to look at this issue as it may also want to review the mission of graduate study at Providence College and the best direction for the School of Continuing Education, both matters addressed in the Self Study.

Strengths

1. Providence College continues to provide a high quality, student-centered education directed by very dedicated faculty and staff, who have been augmented in recent years by the hiring of a number of excellent new faculty members and administrators.
2. The College has strengthened its financial position by means of successful enrollment strategies that bring in full classes of qualified students, that keep a low discount rate, and that attract a large number of full-paying students, and by means of successful Advancement strategies that led to a capital campaign of \$140 million closing at \$185 million and significantly increased annual giving.

3. The College has enhanced an already beautiful campus with several splendid new facilities notably for Humanities, Business, and Science.
4. The College has invested human and financial resources to address the items emphasized by CIHE in the last review—the mission, improving the system of faculty review, increasing financial resources, diversity, and assessment of the Core program, even though some of the initiatives remain works in progress.

Concerns

1. While the College has developed and approved an ambitious Core Curriculum with nine desired outcomes, it has not developed an effective means of assessment to measure whether it—or indeed the Friar Four as well—has the intended impact on individual students by the time of graduation. Students seem to have little understanding of the goals of the core, and even among faculty members there is little consistency of understanding of those goals outside of the persons who teach Core courses or who developed the program.
2. While the College has been rather successful in its initiative to increase student, faculty, and staff diversity on campus, it has not fully addressed the consequences of that increase. There seems to be a need for more training of faculty and staff in how to work with a more diverse population, and the College will want to consider ways to help that new diversity result in positive changes in the culture of the institution itself.
3. Some organizational issues have grown out of the decision to have four schools with individual deans. The four units are very different, and it seems clear that the transition has not worked as effectively in some as in others. Faculty are often unclear about whether a given issue goes to the dean or the provost and unclear about the process for recommending changes. The College, moreover, will want to plan the best way to organize and deliver programs now in the School for Continuing Education, whose function seems to be diffuse.
4. Communication continues to be an issue raised by many people on campus. There does not always seem to be clear communication from the top about new policies being implemented, major College plans being made, and College positions on certain matters; and faculty, staff, and students call for clearer pathways for making their voices heard by those making decisions.