

Report to the  
Faculty, Staff, Administration, Trustees, and Students  
of  
State University of New York at Geneseo  
by  
An Evaluation Team representing the  
Middle States Commission on Higher Education

Prepared after study of the institution's self-study report  
and visit to the campus on March 25-28, 2012

The Members of the Team

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Working with the Team

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**AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT**

**President**

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

SUNY College at Geneseo (1 College Circle, Geneseo, NY 14454; [www.geneseo.edu](http://www.geneseo.edu)) is a public institution with a Carnegie classification of Master's – Medium Programs, affiliated with the State University of New York System, offering 40 Bachelor's Programs and 3 Master's Programs. It was initially accredited in 1952 and last affirmed in 2007.

The review team saw ample evidence of a widely inclusive self-study process involving faculty, staff, students, and led by the Self-Study Steering Committee. All evidence and draft reports were made available on a self-study wiki (<https://wiki.geneseo.edu/display/selfstudy/Self-Study+Home>), and the site provided extensive opportunity for community comment and input. The self-study was organized thematically, with *transformational learning* providing the organizational structure for six chapters wherein standards were embedded: Mission and Goals (Standards 1, 2, 3), Student Learning and Development (Standards 11, 12, 13), Student Success (Standards 8, 9, 6), Resources (Standards 3,10), Leadership and Governance (Standards 4, 5, 6), and Institutional Effectiveness (Standards 7, 14).

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

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

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

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

## **IV. Evaluation Overview**

The review team concludes, based on meetings with students, faculty, and staff, that the mission is supported and well-understood by the college community. Planning goals and resource allocation align with the college's mission. The budget reflects campus priorities and the institution met the challenges of drastic reductions in state support with creative and courageous responses. The institution continues to advance its mission by adopting activities that promote transformational learning. The team suggests that Geneseo may wish to establish a consistent reporting process for annual divisional planning that directly links strategic plan goals to annual unit objectives.

The college should be congratulated for the prudent expenditure controls it has instituted to address the significant cuts in operating state support. The evaluation team applauds the college's effort to explore alternative sources of revenue and for clearly aligning these efforts with the goals of its strategic plan, and commends the college for using the financial crisis as an opportunity to move the institution forward strategically. The evaluation team supports the self-study recommendation of establishing a more systematic schedule of equipment replacement.

We applaud recent initiatives by faculty leadership to improve the understanding of, interest in, and effectiveness of the College Senate. Regarding governance, the team has three suggestions: enhance the transparency of shared governance processes; educate faculty, staff, and students about shared governance; continue recent conversations about the assessment of current shared governance structures and procedures. The administration has worked

collaboratively within the shared governance system in a time of financial crisis. We saw how collaborative efforts contributed to establishing transformational learning as an overarching concept for institutional renewal. The pervasiveness of this concept on campus is displayed in its deployment as the theme of the self-study. Still, there seems to be some confusion about processes and for this reason the team suggests codifying all relevant policies into faculty and staff handbooks.

The college's use of a wiki to store and communicate assessment results facilitates discussion and knowledge transfer among appropriate college constituents and the community as a whole. The Diversity Plan is a model for using assessment findings to develop goals and objectives linked to strategic goals and institutional mission. The college may want to re-examine the Strategic Performance Indicators to ensure alignment with the strategic plan goals. The indicators should provide adequate evidence that the college is measuring the achievement of its goals. The team has two recommendations in this area: establish clear ownership for institutional effectiveness; and work to document, organize, and sustain the institutional assessment process and ensure alignment with the college's mission and strategic plan goals.

We found that the expansion of downstate recruiting has been successful and appears to be the future direction for admission focus. The concerted effort to increase the number of transfer students is working, and programs aimed at new transfers are effective and well-deployed. The retention of students to graduation in this time of financial strain is significant, as is continuing to offer needed classes, support programs, and services. The evaluation of advising reveals an academic service that may be out of alignment with the transformation mission of the college and needs to continue to be reviewed and examined.

The intentionality of student services yields a strong role in the education of Geneseo students. The Division is committed to assessment and there are numerous examples of how the information is used to evaluate and improve programs. There are several programs and activities offered through this unit that clearly meet the goals of transformational learning. Geneseo is to be congratulated for addressing important needs through such innovative programs as Geneseo Cares, Geneseo Goes to Town, and Into the Streets. Goals such as social transition and academic transition continue to be assessed and adjusted for improvement. The team supports the self-study recommendations to review, re-structure, and develop first year programs and to designate one area that can organize and support current and future internship initiatives. The team also suggests that SUNY-Geneseo pursue the self-study recommendation to enhance and coordinate tutoring opportunities to serve students across the college.

The general education program is to be commended for its integration of course and general education outcomes, and the use of assessment results to close the assessment loop. The wiki makes the retrieval of assessment data rapid and transparent, and more importantly, has improved the college's culture of assessment and its ability to conduct effective assessments. In part a response to this success, the team suggests that the college continue to collect, record, and review departmental assessment information in the wiki, and to expand upon the model established by the general education program to align and document program assessments. There is overwhelming evidence that the college is fulfilling its mission. The team encourages the college to articulate its institutional learning outcomes to show alignment among course, program, and institutional learning outcomes.

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

### **Chapter 1 — Mission and Goals**

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

**The institution meets these standards based on the evidence presented in this chapter and in Chapter 4.**

### **Chapter 2 — Student Learning and Development**

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

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

### **Chapter 3 — Student Success**

This section covers the following standards: Standard 8: Student Admissions and Retention Procedures; Standard 9: Student Support Services; Standard 6: Integrity.

**The institution meets these standards based on the evidence presented in this chapter and Chapter 5.**

### **Chapter 4 — Resources**

This section covers the following standards: Standard 3: Resources; Standard 10: Faculty.

**The institution meets these standards based on the evidence presented in this chapter and Chapter 1.**

### **Chapter 5 — Leadership and Governance**

This section covers the following standards: Standard 4: Leadership and Governance; Standard 5: Administration; Standard 6: Integrity.

**The institution meets these standards based on the evidence presented in this chapter and Chapter 3.**

### **Chapter 6 — Institutional Effectiveness**

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

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

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

*The institution's mission clearly defines its purpose within the context of higher education and indicates whom the institution serves and what it intends to accomplish. The institution's stated goals, consistent with the aspirations and expectations of higher education, clearly specify how the institution will fulfill its mission. The mission and goals are developed and recognized by the institution with the participation of its members and its governing body and are utilized to develop and shape its programs and practices and to evaluate its effectiveness.*

The institution meets this standard.

### Summary of evidence and findings

The mission of SUNY Geneseo is to combine a rigorous curriculum and a rich co-curricular life to create a student-centered environment. Accordingly, the entire college community strives to work together to develop socially responsible citizens with skills and values important to the pursuit of an enriched life and success in the world.

The review team concludes, based on meetings with students, faculty, and staff, that the mission is supported and well-understood by the college community. The mission is prominently displayed on the college's website.

The rigorous level in academic courses was verified by an inspection of the syllabi of several randomly chosen courses. Geneseo offers substantial student life enrichments such as frequent workshops and guest lectures. Its students have a commendable record of service that has been consistently recognized by the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll. Geneseo is among 114 colleges across the nation named this year to the Honor Roll with Distinction.

The team concludes that the actions of Geneseo are consistent with this mission.

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

*An institution conducts ongoing planning and resource allocation based on its mission and goals, develops objectives to achieve them, and utilizes the results of its assessment activities for institutional renewal. Implementation and subsequent evaluation of the success of the strategic plan and resource allocation support the development and change necessary to improve and to maintain institutional quality.*

The institution meets this standard.

### Summary of evidence and findings

In 2002, the college's Strategic Planning Group established seven planning goals and supporting objectives that align with the institution's mission and vision statements. These seven planning goals focus on maintaining high quality education, developing a diverse community, integrating curricular and co-curricular programs, cultivating relationships with the external community, expanding funding from external resources, promoting institutional effectiveness, and enhancing facilities. According to the self-study, broad consultation with the campus community was a component of the planning process. The planning process is monitored by the Strategic Planning Group (SPG). The SPG, described in the Geneseo Faculty Constitution, has responsibility for defining overarching goals, evaluating priorities, and recommending new or revised goals or strategies. The SPG found (as documented in the 2008 Progress Report) that a majority of the planning goals had an "in progress" status.

The college launched the *Six Big Ideas* initiative in 2009 to further reinforce its planning goals and to provide a course of action during a period of declining state resources. Committees were formed for planning the Six Big Ideas and as of the self-study, have completed their work. Recommendations from these committees are in various stages of implementation. For example,

transformational learning strategies are in early stages of implementation while co-curricular activities such as the Real World Geneseo Program, Extreme Learning Course and Teaching and Learning Center programs are all in progress. The Six Big Ideas were incorporated as objectives under corresponding strategic goals in the February 2012 SPG update.

Since FY 2009, the college has faced significant decreases in state support. To address the fiscal crisis, Geneseo focused on innovation through the *Six Big Ideas* and program deactivation. The Budget Priorities Committee sought input from the SPG to determine which programs would be considered for deactivation. The SPG used criteria forwarded by the Budget Priorities Committee to evaluate programs. The criteria included centrality to mission, program cost, program quality, program sustainability, enrollment trends, and institutional interrelatedness. The SPG incorporated data from ongoing assessments with enrollment and cost information. The cabinet, with input from the Budget Priorities Committee and the SPG, deactivated three majors: Art Studio, Computer Science, and Communicative Disorders and Sciences.

Cabinet members participate in an annual planning process with their component units. The cabinet has two planning retreats per year where annual goals are discussed. The cabinet, through its annual plans, has allocated resources even in the face of dwindling state resources to initiatives related to strategic planning goals. Examples of this include grants to academic departments to integrate transformational learning practices in both the curriculum and in student affairs; support for increased undergraduate research activities; enrollment increases in diverse student populations; integrating technology to support and share planning information and assessment practices; and continued sustainability efforts. Cabinet members are also members of SPG. Overall, planning goals and resource allocation align with the college's mission. The budget reflects campus priorities and it appears to meet the challenges of a difficult budget situation and changing environment.

#### Significant accomplishments

There is evidence that the college has met the majority of the goals in the 2002 strategic plan. The institution continues to move forward its mission by adopting activities that promote transformational learning. The SPG and the Budget Priorities Committee evaluated potential programs for deactivation based upon a clear rubric that was tied to mission of the college. The evaluation results presented by these two groups informed the cabinet's final decision.

#### Suggestion

Geneseo may wish to establish a consistent reporting process for annual divisional planning that directly links Strategic Plan goals to annual unit objectives. A model to consider is the one currently used by the Student and Campus Life division.

#### **Standard 3: Institutional Resources**

*The human, financial, technical, physical facilities and other resources necessary to achieve an institution's mission and goals are available and accessible. In the context of the institution's mission, the effective and efficient uses of the institution's resources are analyzed as part of ongoing outcomes assessment.*

The institution meets this standard.

### Summary of evidence and findings

As evident in the self-study and other supporting documentation provided, SUNY-Geneseo is using its institutional resources to effectively and efficiently accomplish its mission. Due to the global economic recession that has impacted New York State's ability to provide adequate financial support to the college, Geneseo has moved towards a system of greater financial flexibility by exploring alternative sources of revenue to finance its operations. The self-study indicates that the committees of the *Six Big Ideas* were established by the president with the goal of developing recommendations capable of producing structural budgetary savings while strengthening the college.

According to the self-study, four strategic initiatives have potential for generating new revenues: innovative five-year professional programs; expanded instructional delivery; a center for collaborative research; and a center for strategic community partnerships. The college has seen some early success from its revenue diversification efforts. The following results were cited in the self-study:

- Expanded instructional delivery increased 2011 summer session revenue by 13 percent, or \$193,188, over the 2010 summer session.
- Tuition from study abroad programs increased 112 percent, or \$355,055, from FY 2008 to FY 2011.
- Support from Campus Auxiliary Services to the college almost doubled since FY 2007, totaling \$1.43 million in FY 2011.

In response to drastic reductions in state appropriations, the college has adopted an allocation approach to ensure that there are adequate resources to preserve the quality of its academic programs. A series of expenditure controls was implemented, including a hiring freeze, restrictions on travel, utility conservation, and targeted program closures. The self-study indicates that the process and criteria for program closures were linked to the mission and planning goals of the college and three programs with projected savings of \$1.97 million were selected for deactivation after months of enrollment and program cost data assessment. Additional investment in the academic core is evident in the fiscal year 2013 budget planning, which includes the filling of 22 additional faculty lines, according to the self-study and information provided by the administration. The college's financial planning and budgeting processes are aligned with its strategic planning process. There exists an assessment process designed to provide data to the President's Cabinet, the Strategic Planning Group, and the Budget Advisory Committee to inform their planning and budgetary decisions.

The self-study indicates that the college has developed a five-year strategic plan that will reduce the operating budget reliance on reserves. By fiscal year 2011, the college had funded operating expenditures totaling \$2.4 million from other fund groups not supported by state appropriations (State University Tuition Reimbursable Account and Income Fund Reimbursable). The connection between the budget projections and the reduced reliance on reserves is evident from the multi-year financial plan and other supporting documentation provided with the self-study.

Despite the reduction in operating budget support, the state has provided capital funding for the implementation of the college's facilities master plan. The self-study reports that the college has

made significant investment in a new Integrated Science Center that placed all of the natural sciences (physics and astronomy, chemistry, biology, and geology) in one location at a cost of \$57 million. The college's stated goal for this center is to "promote increased collaboration, facilitate new research initiatives, and allow Geneseo to build on its reputation as SUNY's most selective undergraduate institution, specializing in educating New York's future science leaders." A number of other noteworthy capital projects (the Doty Building, Bailey Hall, Letchworth Dining Hall and the college stadium) are currently under construction or in the strategic planning phase.

According to the self-study, Geneseo addresses major academic equipment needs with funding from capital bonds, internal reserves, and state and federal earmarks. Geneseo had invested over \$6.4 million in scientific equipment in the newly constructed Integrated Science Center and the college has also utilized various state programs to purchase equipment that supports high-impact learning activities. Currently the college does not have a systematic equipment replacement program in place; however, the self-study indicates that this is a priority of the Division of Administration and Finance.

Annual independent audited financial statements are not available for individual campuses within the SUNY system; however, annual IPEDS reports for fiscal years 2009 through 2011 were provided along with the most recent independent audit (June 30, 2011) for Geneseo's Foundation. There was no evidence of any concerns cited in this audit by the independent accounting firm.

#### Significant Accomplishment

The college should be congratulated for the prudent expenditure controls it has instituted to address the significant cuts in operating state support. The evaluation team applauds the college's effort to explore alternative sources of revenue and for clearly aligning these efforts with the goals of its strategic plan. Despite budgetary constraints, the college has developed a new facilities master plan linked to its strategic plan and that addresses critical maintenance needs and strategic program initiatives over the next ten years.

#### Commendation

The evaluation team applauds the college for using the financial crisis as an opportunity to move the institution forward strategically.

#### Suggestion

The evaluation team supports the Self-Study recommendation of establishing a more systematic schedule of equipment replacement.

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

*The institution's system of governance clearly defines the roles of institutional constituencies in policy development and decision-making. The governance structure includes an active governing body with sufficient autonomy to assure institutional integrity and to fulfill its responsibilities of policy and resource development, consistent with the mission of the institution.*

The institution meets this standard.

### Summary of evidence and findings

The State University of New York at Geneseo is part of the State University of New York system, and therefore its governance and leadership structures must comply with *The State University of New York Policies of the Board of Trustees*. SUNY Geneseo's governance and leadership structures comply with *The State University of New York Policies of the Board of Trustees*.

In compliance with *The State University of New York Policies of the Board of Trustees*, Geneseo has elected representation on the University Faculty Senate, which is the official agency through which the faculty from all State University of New York institutions other than community colleges engage in governance of the University. The Senate is concerned with effective educational policies and other professional matters within the State University. In compliance with *The State University of New York Policies of the Board of Trustees*, Geneseo has a College Council that develops and fosters relationships between the college and the local community, and promotes the college's and State University's interests.

*The State University of New York Policies of the Board of Trustees* gives a clear charge to the president of Geneseo. The document also provides a generic charge to the senior administrators that compose the College Administrative Conference (the Cabinet at Geneseo). *The State University of New York Policies of the Board of Trustees* charges the college faculty with the "obligation to participate significantly in the initiation, development, and implementation of the educational program" at Geneseo. The college faculty includes the SUNY chancellor, the college president, academic staff having academic rank, and other administrators and staff as specified by the faculty bylaws—which at Geneseo includes teaching faculty and administrative faculty as defined in Article II, Section 1, footnote 1, of *The Constitution of the Faculty of SUNY Geneseo*—and such nonvoting administrative officers and professional staff as designated by the faculty bylaws.

*The State University of New York Policies of the Board of Trustees* provides for a Student Assembly. This assembly is the official organization by which SUNY students participate in college-wide governance. Geneseo's student government president serves as its representative on the Student Assembly. *The Constitution of the Faculty of the State University of New York at Geneseo* establishes four governing bodies: 1) The Faculty, 2) Standing Committees of the Faculty, 3) The College Senate, and 4) Standing Committees of the College Senate

The Faculty decides matters referred to the faculty-at-large by the college president or by the College Senate. The Standing Committees of the Faculty are responsible to the faculty through the Executive Committee of the College Senate or through the College Senate. The College Senate, the representative governing body of the faculty, includes the college president, provost, all vice presidents, the dean of curriculum and academic services, administrative faculty, students, and teaching faculty. The College Senate has five standing committees: Undergraduate Curriculum Committee; Graduate Curriculum Committee; Policy Committee; Faculty Affairs Committee; and, Student Affairs Committee. All of the standing committees have students, faculty, and administrative representation (drawn from College Senate members). The College Senate makes recommendations to the college president, College Council, chancellor, University

Board of Trustees, and/or any other appropriate individual or body. The Standing Committees of the college make recommendations to either or both the president and the Faculty through the Executive Committee of the Senate and through the College Senate.

The president and previous provosts established numerous task forces, outside of the standing committees of the Faculty, College Senate, and college to investigate and deliberate on curricular and academic support related issues, as well as issues that could impact faculty workload. Although there are many reports, proposals, and recommendations, it is hard to identify where many of the proposals and recommendations are in the formal policy-making process. The self-study notes “follow-up on task force recommendations has been inconsistent.”

The current governance structure does not appear to be efficient, consistent, or well-understood. The self-study notes and conversations during the campus visit confirm, there is “poor understanding of the role of governance” and the role campus community members can play in it. In addition, the “current governance system is underutilized by the senate’s constituency as a forum for advancing institutional goals.” The current College Senate chair initiated several efforts to address some of the criticisms of the College Senate. He has worked to clean up *The Constitution of the Faculty of The State University of New York at Geneseo, New York* by clarifying conflicting statements. He has called meetings of the faculty to discuss faculty perceptions that the College Senate has been bypassed by task forces, the possibility of creating a representative body of faculty, and other governance issues.

The provost recently turned to the College Senate to assist in identifying faculty to serve on a consultative group regarding the new faculty allocation process.

#### Significant Accomplishment

We applaud recent initiatives by the College Senate Chair to improve the understanding of, interest in, and effectiveness of the College Senate.

#### Suggestions

- Enhance the transparency of shared governance with improved communications at all stages of the policy making process.
- Establish a program to educate faculty, staff, and students about shared governance to enhance understanding and interest in college governance.
- Continue the conversations about the assessment of current shared governance structures and procedures recently begun by the College Senate chair.

#### **Standard 5: Administration**

*The institution's administrative structure and services facilitate learning and research/scholarship, foster quality improvement, and support the institution's organization and governance.*

The institution meets this standard.

#### Summary of evidence and findings

The president has the combination of academic background, professional training, and administrative experience appropriate to effectively lead Geneseo towards the achievement of its mission. The self-study indicates that the qualifications of the other senior administrative officers, such as the provost and vice presidents, are clearly defined and that several members of the president's cabinet have served as chairs and members of visiting teams for re-accreditation for Middle States and other regional accrediting bodies. The college's organizational chart illustrates that there is a clear documentation of the lines of organization and authority for each administrative division.

### Significant Accomplishment

The self-study demonstrates that there are effective information and decision-making systems to support the work of administrative leaders. One example is that the administration worked collaboratively in a time of financial crisis with the college's system of governance in initiating the concept of transformational learning with the formation of the Six Big Ideas committees. We saw how the work of the Bringing Theory to Practice task force contributed to establishing transformational learning as an overarching concept for institutional renewal; the pervasiveness of this concept on campus is displayed in its deployment as the theme of the self-study.

### **Standard 6: Integrity**

*In the conduct of its programs and activities involving the public and the constituencies it serves, the institution demonstrates adherence to ethical standards and its own stated policies, providing support for academic and intellectual freedom.*

The institution meets this standard.

### Summary of evidence and findings

Students interested in applying for admission will find an accurate description on the Geneseo website of what awaits them at the college. The Student Code of Conduct is also available on the website and gives a clear statement of rights and responsibilities including grievance procedures. Hiring and retention practices are reasonable and non-discriminatory. The promotion and tenure evaluation procedure is well-delineated and the elected faculty peer review committee plays an important part in the decision making process. The administration strives for transparency in its decisions. The procedures employed in the deactivation of three programs attest to this value as does the openness and inclusiveness evident in the preparation of the self-study. The self-study is posted on the web and is available to the college community. Another example of transparency and of a collegial mode of decision-making is the ongoing discussions of a modification in the student course load. Surveys of students and faculty done by Geneseo indicate no major discrepancies between policies and implementation.

### Suggestion

Compile all relevant policies into faculty and staff handbooks.

### **Standard 7: Institutional Assessment**

*The institution has developed and implemented an assessment process that evaluates its overall effectiveness in achieving its mission and goals and its compliance with accreditation standards.*

The institution meets this standard.

#### Summary of evidence and findings

Geneseo's institutional effectiveness process feeds assessment information from academic programs and non-academic units to division heads and finally to the College Assessment Advisory Council (CAAC). The CAAC in turn shares assessment findings with the Strategic Planning Group (SPG) and the Budget Priorities Committee.

Duties of the CAAC include reviewing divisional assessment reports, evaluating assessment practices, developing recommendations to coordinate planning and assessment, and encouraging the use of evidence in decision-making. While the CAAC has been in place for a number of years, it is only recently that the CAAC developed an approach for collecting, summarizing and sharing academic and non-academic assessment reports with the Strategic Planning Group. In its first report to the SPG (February 2012), the CAAC found that after reviewing assessment findings, there were no implications for college-wide strategic planning, but rather the findings informed units' assessments. However, the CAAC has offered the following recommendations to the SPG for improving the overall institutional effectiveness process: include assessment findings in unit annual reports; share assessment findings within the unit and document decisions related to assessment with CAAC; give greater attention to aligning unit-level assessment with program and institutional goals; use college-level data in future CAAC discussions; and conduct an employee satisfaction survey. As of the time of the visit, the SPG had not yet reviewed the CAAC report.

The SPG updates the status of strategic goals and the supporting objectives on a periodic basis. The most recent update was 2012. A status report on the self-study wiki includes targets and assessment results, a summary response, and the objective status. The SPG recently developed strategic performance indicators which provide data related to entering class characteristics; retention and graduation rates; participation in transformational learning activities; diversity; civic engagement; faculty, student and campus life; and advancement. Indicators for technology are yet to be defined and trend data was not available for several facilities and administration indicators. The indicators show varying levels of progress in the areas listed above.

The SPG also reviews other college plans. For example, the SPG recently reviewed the draft Campus Diversity Plan. The draft Diversity Plan, forwarded to SPG by the President's Commission on Diversity and Community, recommended five overarching goals and measurable objectives. The Commission developed these goals after tracking information on several indicators, including indirect measures of campus climate. According to the Commission, the SPG has approved the Diversity Plan and is presently assigning ownership to the goals.

Collaboration between the SPG and Budget Priorities Committee to evaluate programs for deactivation provides evidence of using assessment results to support decision making. These two committees also collaborated on the recent call for equipment purchases. Administrative unit assessments utilize various approaches across units and divisions, to varying degrees. In Student and Campus Life as well as in Administration and Finance, assessment is embedded in either department head performance evaluations or unit annual reports. Enrollment Services regularly reviews its print and electronic materials. Enrollment Services also evaluates its applicant pool

process, as well as its processes for reviewing admissions candidates. College Advancement tracks alumni participation in events and also conducts alumni surveys. The College Communications Office surveys alumni on a systematic basis and regularly assesses the effectiveness of its communications.

#### Significant accomplishments

- The college's use of the wiki to store and communicate assessment results facilitates discussion and knowledge transfer among appropriate college constituents and the community as a whole. The wiki promotes transparency and communication.
- The Diversity Plan is a model for using assessment findings to develop goals and objectives linked to strategic goals and institutional mission.

#### Suggestion

The college may want to re-examine the Strategic Performance Indicators to ensure alignment with the strategic plan goals. The indicators should provide adequate evidence that the college is measuring the achievement of its goals.

#### Recommendations

- The college needs to establish clear ownership for institutional effectiveness. This responsibility may reside with a committee, an office, or a college employee. The assignment of ownership would facilitate implementation and confidence in the process.
- The college should document, organize, and sustain its institutional assessment process and ensure alignment with its mission and strategic plan goals.

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

*The institution seeks to admit students whose interests, goals, and abilities are congruent with its mission and seeks to retain them through the pursuit of the students' educational goals.*

The institution meets this standard.

#### Summary of Evidence and Findings

Admissions policies support and reflect the mission of Geneseo. The criteria for acceptance are clearly stated and appear to be consistently followed. Quality of the applicant pool, as well as the class profile, has been maintained despite declining applicant pools (from a 2008 high of 10,589 to 9,558 in 2011) and increased and intense competition for students. The mean SAT score declined only slightly, as well as a less than 1 percent decline in class rank. With a goal to increase diversity, the enrollees by ethnicity in the 2011 class increased by 2.5 percent. Programs with special criteria (e.g., Access Opportunity Programs [AOP], the Honors program, and International students) have standard procedures for acceptance and these procedures are followed.

The retention of students to graduation has been consistent with the admissions profile. Currently over 80 percent of students are retained to graduation. Support services are available for students who marginally meet qualifications and are offered through the AOP office. The one year that the AOP summer program was not offered students did not meet the levels necessary to be

successful and the summer program was reinstated. Academic advising continues to be identified by students and faculty as an area of concern.

There are clear statements of Geneseo's institutional identity: strong liberal arts characterized by transformational learning. The quality of admissions publications and web presentations are excellent.

The goal for more out-of-state students has not been realized and does not seem to be realistic at this time.

### Significant Accomplishments

- Sustaining enrollment by focusing on downstate markets while enhancing and maintaining the academic profile is outstanding. A very close eye is kept on the admissions cycle and changes are implemented when necessary to meet the goals. Long term analysis of applicants, acceptance, and how students applied, among other criteria, drive the admissions process. The expansion of downstate recruiting has been successful and appears to be the future direction, as the numbers of prospective students stays viable.
- The concerted effort to increase the number of transfer students is working successfully with the Guaranteed Admission Program allowing students to begin academic work at another institution, followed by guaranteed admission to Geneseo. Information is available so that transfer students can see what courses will transfer and how they can meet academic requirements, making transfer a friendly process. Programs aimed at new transfers are also an important piece for this group.
- Retention of students to graduation in this time of financial strain is significant. Continuing to offer the needed classes, as well as programs and services, has not happened without sacrifice.

### Suggestions

- The resources for increasing the numbers of out-of-state students are not available at this time at Geneseo. It makes sense to stay with the emerging markets that are working. Continuing to look at increases in the international student market seems more feasible, as well as continued expansion of downstate markets. Both of these initiatives have been successful.
- The evaluation of advising reveals an academic service that may be out of alignment with the transformation mission of the college. The coordination of advising, as well as the role and rewards for faculty serving in the advising process, needs to continue to be reviewed and examined.

### **Standard 9: Student Support Services**

*The institution provides student support services reasonably necessary to enable each student to achieve the institution's goals for students.*

The institution meets this standard.

### Summary of Evidence and Findings

In the division of Student and Campus Life, each director follows a standard format for annual reports and the division utilizes the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) standards for annual reports and performance review. Program reviews of Career Services and Health and Counseling Services allowed for the reassignment of responsibilities. The use of the standards has also been helpful for staff to organize work around learning objectives. We noted several examples of how the assessment work has impacted the units and improved services for students. The assessment loop is completed when the director completes yearly annual reports.

Health and Counseling Services has been accredited by the Association for Ambulatory Health Care. The office and procedures are being reorganized in order to meet the growing needs of students, as determined through the assessment work of the office. There is a clear and defined process for grievances and complaints. The student handbook has a well-defined judicial and hearing process as required by the State of New York.

Students are interested in internships and currently there is no college-wide coordinated effort. The data from the employers' survey confirms that this is an area that needs attention. A position in Career Services was withdrawn due to budget constraints.

#### Significant Accomplishments

- The Division of Student and Campus Life has a structure designed to enhance the goal of transformational learning and has excellent programs that are known campus wide and are accomplished through a great deal of collaboration among the student life staff, faculty, and other college staff. The intentionality of this organization allows the Division to effectively impact the education of the Geneseo student.
- The Division is committed to assessment and there are numerous examples of how the information is used to evaluate and improve programs. Assessment data is also utilized in the planning process.
- There are several programs and activities offered through this unit that clearly meet the goals of transformational learning. Geneseo Opportunities for Leadership Development (GOLD) is highlighted across campus and nationally by National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) and American College Personnel Association (ACPA), as a very successful program. It is clearly well integrated as a collaborative effort with student life and academic affairs, as well as Bringing Theory to Practice. The number of programs, as well as the number of students who participate is admirable (over 600 students in fall of 2011).
- The organization of the Center for Community and the College Union and Activities clearly helps to address the holistic needs of students. Programs like Bystander Intervention Training and Stand Up for One Another are distinctive programs that may provide models for emulation. Geneseo is to be congratulated for addressing important needs through such innovative programs as Livingston Cares, Geneseo Goes to Town, and Into the Streets, to name a few. These initiatives provide transformational learning.
- Recognizing that new transfers are important to admissions and retention efforts, the development of "You Belong" is an example of a new program to assist the successful transition for those transfers. Goals such as social transition and academic transition

continue to be assessed and adjusted for improvement. The program evolution further highlights the collaborative work culture in the division.

### Suggestions

- The team supports the self study recommendation to review, re-structure, and develop the First Year Programs.
- The team supports the self study recommendation to designate one area that can organize and support current and future internship initiatives.

### **Standard 10: Faculty**

*The institution's instructional, research, and service programs are devised, developed, monitored, and supported by qualified professionals.*

The institution meets this standard.

### Summary of Evidence and Findings

SUNY Geneseo recognizes the centrality of the faculty to achieving its mission and consequently recruits qualified faculty who support the academic undertaking and are accountable to the institution. The faculty of Geneseo have the academic and experiential credentials appropriate to serve the mission and goals of the institution. Over ninety percent of the faculty has a doctorate or an appropriate terminal master's degree. In spite of the retrenchment experienced in the past five years, Geneseo has been able to preserve a high full-time to part-time ratio (242:97). Budget cuts, however, have resulted in an increase in the student-faculty ratio from 19:1 to 20:1, which has created some level of anxiety among full-time faculty. The erosion of the student-faculty ratio has also resulted in a modest increase of part-time faculty.

A plan for filling 22 additional faculty lines is built into the 2013 budget. It is also commendable that there have been some gains (albeit modest) in the hiring of women. Unfortunately such has not been the case for ethnic minority groups whose representation is still low (13% for all groups combined). It is likely that faculty salaries that are below the national median will have an impact on the institution's ability to hire and retain highly qualified professors, but may also undermine efforts for increasing diversity. The institution is committed to using the hiring of the 22 new faculty as an opportunity to increase diversity. The overall distribution of faculty by rank is comparable with similar institutions, with approximately three out of four faculty being tenured.

Faculty are involved in scholarly activity and, in addition, a great majority of them are strong supporters of mentoring undergraduate students in research and collaborate with them in their own research. The institution has supported this effort with extra funds, and the student association provides funds that are matched by the Geneseo Foundation to encourage student-faculty research. Consistent with the institution's mission, teaching remains the faculty's most important responsibility.

Procedures for hiring, promotion and tenure are clear and participatory and are stated in written documents as well as discussed in yearly meetings run by the president, the provost, and the Faculty Personnel Committee. Consistent with the college mission, teaching is weighted more

heavily than scholarship or service. Pre-tenured faculty are evaluated every two years (or more frequently, depending on their contract). The Faculty Personnel Committee participates only on the continuing appointments (tenure) and promotion actions, while the periodic review of untenured faculty is conducted at the department, chair, provost and president levels. All those involved in searches (faculty and staff) receive training before getting involved. The hiring process reflects the institution's strong commitment to affirmative action. The evaluation of the faculty follows a well-disseminated process, based on the SUNY Board of Trustees policies and explicitly described in college-wide and in department documents.

Faculty development is a goal promoted and facilitated through different mechanisms and offices. Sabbaticals are strongly supported by the administration and there is a commitment that fiscal hindrances will not preclude their availability in the future. Sabbaticals are awarded each year through a rigorous peer review process in which faculty are invited by the provost to participate. Also, faculty are encouraged to participate in scholarly activities through different awards, grants and fellowships or other benefits (such as start-up funds) managed by the president, provost, or the Office of Sponsored Research. The Teaching and Learning Center, in collaboration with the Provost's Office, sponsors other development activities such as a faculty colloquium series. These development opportunities are also made available to part-time faculty.

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

*The institution's educational offerings display academic content, rigor, and coherence appropriate to its higher education mission. The institution identifies student learning goals and objectives, including knowledge and skills, for its educational offerings.*

The institution meets this standard.

#### Summary of evidence and findings

The college offers a variety of programs and degrees with appropriate content and rigor that correspond well with its vision and mission. The specialized accreditation of several programs offers additional confirmation of the appropriate content and rigor of these select programs. The policy for transfer credit from other institutions is articulated clearly in the catalog and in additional locations on-line. The college faculty, departments, and several committees and task forces have done much work to discuss, identify, and define learning outcomes for courses, programs, and the institution. However, the strength of the culture of assessment varies among academic departments. This is addressed further in Standard 14.

The facilities, equipment, and other resources (including the Milne Library and the Teaching and Learning Center) essential to fulfilling the academic mission of the college are adequate. During the recent period of fiscal stress, the college has continued striving to improve the facilities, equipment, and other resources essential to fulfilling the academic mission. The college engages in facilities planning, recently creating two five-year (2012-2017 & 2018- 2023) facilities plans with its academic mission at the center of decision-making.

The college's interest in increasing high-impact learning experiences is growing. Although the college has increased funding for students engaged in research and has seen a substantial increase in the number of students studying abroad, the financial support required and the

opportunities for local partnerships (including for internships) will need to be closely monitored if they are to meet the desire to increase high-impact opportunities.

Several committees and task forces have investigated components of the educational program offered at Geneseo and have produced numerous reports and recommendations. These include: supporting integrating high-impact learning experiences in the curriculum; folding transformational learning to the institutional mission; making changes to the general education program; and changing the student course load. Few of these recommendations have been vetted through the formal governance process beginning with College Senate standing committees.

The recent decisions to deactivate three programs (Communicative Disorders and Sciences, Computer Science, and Studio Art) appear fiscally sound and in accordance with criteria matched to the college's mission and planning goals.

### Significant Accomplishments

- The Guaranteed Admission Program offers applicants deferred admission and represents a creative means for students to demonstrate college readiness by starting their academic careers with transfer credits. The You Belong program assists transfer students in their academic and social transition to Geneseo.
- Geneseo is ranked eighth in the nation among Master's schools in the number of doctorates earned by alumni from 2000-2009. It ranked third in nation among Master's degree schools as a baccalaureate source of STEM field doctorates.
- The HERI survey found that 67 percent of full-time faculty members reported including undergraduates in their research, compared to 44 percent of full-time faculty at other public, 4-year colleges.

### Suggestions

- Improve academic advising by building on the statistic in the self-study that a "large majority (83%) of faculty believe that advisement is an appropriate use of their time and believe in providing thorough academic advisement."
- Pursue the self-study recommendation to enhance and coordinate tutoring opportunities to serve students across the college and the development of a centralized learning center for students.

### **Standard 12: General Education**

*The institution's curricula are designed so that students acquire and demonstrate college-level proficiency in general education and essential skills, including at least oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, and technological competency.*

The institution meets this standard.

### Summary of evidence and findings

The institution views general education as an essential component of the strategy of transformational learning; in essence as an integrator of the entire curriculum. As a member of SUNY, Geneseo's General education program abides by the specific set of minimum

requirements set at the central level; those courses that exceed the system-wide requirements are labeled “local graduation requirements.” Program courses are complemented by other activities (for example the language requirement is associated with a vibrant study abroad program). Required courses start in the first year and span throughout the entire undergraduate education. Reading and writing courses, organized around different themes, are taken during the first year, followed by eleven courses dealing with non-western cultures, history of the United States, symbolic reasoning, fine arts, social sciences, natural sciences, humanities and foreign language. Some of these requirements are fulfilled through the requirements of the student’s major; for example, a social science major fulfills the symbolic reasoning requirement by taking a related course in the major. Most recently, participation in performances has been accepted as a way of satisfying the fine arts requirement. The change is consistent with strategic goals of transformational learning and integrating co-curricular activities into general education.

In order to assure that the student is exposed to a wide breadth of knowledge, the natural sciences, fine arts, and social science requirements cannot be satisfied by courses in the major. For example, a sociology major cannot satisfy the social science requirement with sociology courses. This seems an appropriate way of ensuring that the student is exposed and is able to contrast different approaches to a specific area. Many courses do not satisfy the requirements of any major but are offered from the perspective of a non-specialist with the purpose of exposing students to ideas that while not specific to their selected field of study will prepare them to be better informed citizens.

Assessment is well integrated in the curriculum of the general education program and has been adequately utilized to make improvements. A rubric is used to assess student progress against specific expectations. Results indicate that the program has been consistently successful in achieving most of its goals, reporting 70 to 80 percent of students meeting or exceeding expectations in some areas. Exceptions were reading and writing (just over 50 percent meeting or exceeding expectations) and the humanities (54 percent meeting or exceeding expectations). Although faculty are enthusiastic about both their participation and the benefits the general education curriculum provide to students, they have expressed dissatisfaction with the student learning outcomes achieved in some areas.

At this time the general education curriculum is undergoing a comprehensive review and changes will likely take place in the near future. Three of the president’s *Six Big Ideas* (Bringing Theory to Practice, Re-thinking the Course Load and Expanding Instructional Delivery) are expected to impact general education as currently offered. It is likely that the first two will result in an increase of experiential learning and high impact components in the syllabi of different courses.

The General Education Committee has been charged by the provost to redesign the general education program so that it is based on student learning outcomes and, according to the self-study, that it incorporates “high-impact learning practices, global initiatives, interdisciplinary work, digital learning, and community engagement and service learning as appropriate.” The committee has drafted a proposal that will be presented to the senate in spring, 2012. We have seen a preliminary draft of this proposal which includes all of the components in the present general education program and potentially others related with high impact experiences.

Undoubtedly, this new proposal will result in some changes in the curriculum of the general education program; however, its goals will remain the same, if not be strengthened, as attested by documents, conversations with the faculty and students, and by its centrality to the institution's mission.

#### Commendation

The general education program is to be commended for its integration of course and general education outcomes, and the use of assessment results to close the assessment loop.

#### **Standard 13: Related Educational Activities**

*The institution's programs or activities that are characterized by particular content, focus, location, mode of delivery, or sponsorship meet appropriate standards.*

The institution meets this standard.

#### Summary of evidence and findings

This standard is quite diverse, including Experiential Education, non Credit offerings consistent with institutional missions and goals, service learning, distance learning, and co-curricular activities. At Geneseo there is clear evidence of collaboration among faculty and student life on many of these programs, including service learning and co-curricular activities. There are several programs that combine the goals of transformational learning with a program that does not generate credits. Sometimes there are credits generated for part of the out-of-classroom activity. Geneseo has some unique programs that combine these characteristics and are seamlessly integrated into the non -credit curriculum that will eventually be part of the supplemental transcript. Geneseo Opportunities for Leadership Development (GOLD) has already been highlighted in Standard 9, but is also appropriate to this standard.

Online instruction is also included in this standard. Online classes are offered in the summer session only and are exclusively made up of courses already in the curriculum, adapted to distance education, and are aimed at currently matriculated students.

#### Significant Accomplishment

The Real World Geneseo program combines retreats and academic coursework, with topics that are related to real life issues. The results of the surveys of students who participate in these programs report the kind of transformative experiences valued and promoted by SUNY-Geneseo.

#### Suggestion

Should online course offerings expand significantly, college administrators will need to be mindful of Middle States distance learning guidelines.

#### **Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning at SUNY Geneseo**

*Assessment of student learning demonstrates that, at graduation, or other appropriate points, the institution's students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional and appropriate higher education goals.*

The institution meets the standard

### Summary of evidence and findings

Based on a review of evidence in the current self-study documents, available course syllabi, the *Undergraduate Bulletin*, stated departmental, programmatic, and institutional goals, values, and outcomes, SUNY-Geneseo documents, interviews with faculty, staff, students, administrators, and others, the review team has determined that SUNY Geneseo exhibits the fundamental elements of and meets Standard 14 for the reasons listed herein. SUNY Geneseo has articulated statements of expected student learning outcomes and systematic, planned assessments for all General Education courses and/or experiences. Faculty integrate critical thinking skills, reading, writing, make co-curricular connections, and engage students in transformational learning experiences by identifying and providing *intentional opportunities* for students to achieve these goals (see also Standard 12).

Although the quality of articulated student learning outcomes varies from exemplary to acceptable, all general education faculty members stress the premier value of basic, broad liberal arts education and routinely assess student learning outcomes. Faculty members in general education courses are aware of the importance of collecting direct and indirect data. They employ rubrics to assess student written work, performances, projects, and portfolios, analyze student reflections, and collect quantitative data to assess cognitive gains, as evidenced in their syllabi. Co-curricular student life experiences and evaluations such as surveys, focus groups, student feedback sessions, and other evaluative tools also provide data used to inform and improve the effectiveness of the general education program (see Standards 11 and 13).

SUNY Geneseo offers an array well-articulated undergraduate major and graduate programs that meet internal, state, and national expectations for successful employment, external accreditation, or entry into and success in graduate and professional schools. Over 95% of the undergraduate majors' programs and all of graduate programs have specified student learning outcomes. Both business and education graduate programs have and maintain national accreditation. Faculty members in all areas collect and analyze direct and indirect evidence of student learning (knowledge and skills) at intermediate points in these programs. Over 85% of the undergraduate academic programs have initiated capstone courses that have substantive assessment value-added assignments such as a research seminar, senior recital, thesis, writing portfolio, internship poster, or fine arts presentations that provide multiple measures that can be used to assess student learning. Departments examine and analyze student capstone data and currently the majority have documented actions taken in response to these data.

Departmental websites, advising documents, faculty commitment to sustained individual student advising (albeit becoming increasingly more difficult with fewer faculty), institutional reputation, alumni networking, research experiences, and internships as appropriate are significant factors in fostering student success in all majors.

Given that a review of Standards 1-13 shows that SUNY-Geneseo is fulfilling its mission and achieving its goals, Middle States evaluators would then ask a fundamental question: "Are students learning what we want them to learn?" MSCHE suggests that a "totality" of institutional data may be used to confirm that it is. For example, 49% of Spring 2010 graduates immediately attended graduate school; these students were from all disciplines, suggesting the combined

effectiveness of the general education, major, and co-curricular programs. Over 850 students will present research projects on campus in April 2012. SUNY-Geneseo ranks 9<sup>th</sup> in the United States for the percent of students engaged in service activities; 30% of students study abroad, and 17% of the student body are members of underrepresented groups. Some 96% of the Spring 2010 graduates were satisfied with the intellectual challenge; 91% of the Spring 2010 graduates would choose Geneseo again. Such student satisfaction was exemplified by the team's interactions with students during our visit. The college should be quite proud of its student achievements.

#### Commendation

The SUNY-Geneseo work on the wiki in preparation for the MSCHE team visit was exceptional. It made the retrieval of assessment data rapid and transparent, and more importantly, has improved the college's culture of assessment and its ability to conduct effective assessments.

#### Suggestions

- We encourage the college to continue to collect, record, and review departmental assessment information into the wiki.
- The alignment and documentation of all program assessments are encouraged to follow the model established for the general education program.
- There is overwhelming evidence that the college is fulfilling its mission. The college is encouraged to articulate its institutional learning outcomes to show alignment among course, program, and institutional learning outcomes.

#### **VI. Summary of Recommendations for Continuing Compliance and Requirements**

The team has two recommendations related to continuing compliance with Standard 7, Institutional Assessment: *The institution has developed and implemented an assessment process that evaluates its overall effectiveness in achieving its mission and goals and its compliance with accreditation standards.* (1) The college needs to establish clear ownership for institutional effectiveness. Responsibility may reside with a committee, an office, or a college employee. The assignment of ownership would facilitate implementation and confidence in the institutional assessment process; (2) the college should document, organize, and sustain its institutional assessment process and ensure alignment with its mission and strategic plan goals.