

Institutional Response
to Middle State Commission on Higher Education's Visitation Team Report – October 13, 2017

North Country Community College
Saranac Lake, NY

October 16, 2017

On behalf of the students, faculty, staff, administration and the Board of Trustees of North Country Community College, I extend our appreciation to the following members of the MSCHE visitation team: Kevin Smay, Assistant Vice President for Strategic Planning & Institutional Research, Community College of Allegheny County and Maureen Lawrence, Vice President for Finance and Administration, Middlesex County College. We also wish to thank Christy Faison, Vice President, MSCHE and Kris Bendakis, SUNY Assistant Provost for joining the team for their visit on September 21-22, 2017.

The purpose of the team's visit was as a follow-up to the monitoring report the College submitted to MSCHE on September 1, 2017. There were four areas that MSCHE required the College to respond to and the team addressed each item in their final report presented to the College on October 13, 2017

On November 17, 2016 the Commission acted to:

To accept the Periodic Review Report and reaffirm accreditation. To request a monitoring report, due September 1, 2017, documenting (1) implementation of the new strategic plan linked to budget and enrollment, and shared with appropriate constituents (Standard 2); (2) steps taken to ensure the institution's financial viability (Standard 3); (3) assessment of the effectiveness of governance processes and procedures (Standard 4); and (4) further implementation of an organized, systematic process to assess student learning, with use of assessment results to inform teaching, learning, budget and planning (Standard 14). A small team visit will follow...

The College is honored to receive a commendation from the visitation team in regard to the relationship between our students and our employees. Our student's success is the center of our work and effective student engagement results in strong connections between students and employees, whether in the classroom, advising or through our student services and programs. As to the findings of the Site Visit report, North Country Community College is in agreement with the Site Visit Team's requirements and recommendations. In regard to each, the College's response is as follows:

Standard Two: Standard 2: Planning, Resource Allocation and Institutional Renewal

The College concurs and accepts the requirement. It acknowledges that the institution had not approved the most recent draft of the 2017-2020 strategic plan. As noted in its monitoring report, over the past year, the College implemented a highly inclusive process for developing a new strategic plan. It followed in the footsteps of the 2012-17 strategic plan. At the September 29, 2017 meeting of the College Board of Trustees and the October 13, 2017 meeting of the College Senate, Draft 5 of the 2017-2020 strategic plan of the College was formally approved.

In regard to the requirement to implement the formerly approved strategic plan, the College will continue to administer the 2017-20 strategic plan as we did previously with the 2012-17 plan. The administration of the previous plan provided the College with regular assessment of the progress on each action item and annually reviewed how progress was linked to annual resource allocation to improve and sustain institutional quality. The College will continue to evaluate the 2017-2020 strategic plan's action items at least annually; and update these action items as well as those measurable outcomes associated with each action.

Standard 3: Institutional Resources

The College concurs and accepts the following recommendations and suggestions presented by the visitation team on October 13th.

Recommendations:

1. Development of a multi-year financial plan that includes operating and capital infrastructure needs tied to the Strategic plan.
2. Assess and update the 2010 Facilities Master Plan, to include an analysis of site and facilities, space utilization, and deferred maintenance needs in order to adequately fund capital project needs going forward.

Suggestions:

1. Annual assessment of the long range financial plan should be conducted prior to the annual budget process to allow the College adequate time to make necessary adjustments in future enrollment, revenue and expense projections.

Standard 4: Leadership and Governance

The College concurs and accepts the following requirements and recommendations and suggestions presented by the visitation team on October 13th.

Recommendations:

1. The College should continue the assessment of its governance structures to clarify roles, processes and procedures.
2. The College should update its governing documents to reflect the findings of their assessment of governance.
3. The College should develop a process for the periodic assessment of the effectiveness of institutional leadership and governance.

Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning

The College agrees that the assessment of student learning must be organized and systematic and will continue to move departments forward in the process of using assessment data in a more deliberate and systematic process. After significant leadership changes in Academic Affairs from 2012-14, the area has stabilized and much progress has been made over the last three years. While those efforts fell short of meeting the MSCHE standard, we wish to note that the faculty accomplished an incredible amount of assessment activities at all levels over that time including assessing institutional learning goals, program goals and review, as well as course-level assessment linked to institutional goals.

We believe we are well on our way towards a systematic and organized program of assessment of student learning at all levels of the institution. We also were aware that putting such a system in place across all departments could not have been completed in the last ten months (upon receipt of the MSCHE decision in November 2016) or even the last three years. Thus, our efforts were directed towards building elements of the system as is evident with the assessment materials presented in the monitoring report and supplemental materials provided to the visitation team in September 2017. These included documentation illustrating that the College has completed 58% of all associate program reviews (68% including those in progress), and 56% of all certificate program reviews with all programs for review by the close of the 2018-2019 academic year (see Program Review Timeline Summary). Over the last three years, departments have consistently assessed 20% of all course sections offered with courses chosen on a rotating basis each semester. Each course-level assessment is aligned with a program-level and institution-level learning outcome(s). The College will continue to increase the number of courses being assessed along with the measurements associated with each outcome.

What is missing from the assessment process described above is the requisite documentation of the regular cycle of assessment for each program-level learning outcome; this will be the primary goal for 2017-2018. With the additional resources we have committed in recent years to assessment of student learning and with the increase in resources scheduled for institutional research in January 2018 (as noted in the College's monitoring report), the College is confident we will complete the following by Fall 2018:

1. All departments will outline a plan for assessing all program-level outcomes over the course of three years. Increased attention and focus on tying student learning outcomes to departmental budgets and planning will be one intended outcome of this process.
2. All six institutional learning outcomes will be assessed by Fall 2019. Over the last three years, our focus has been on three of those College Wide Goals and, as noted, the three that remain will be assessed by Fall 2019. Going forward, all of the institutional learning outcomes will be assessed regularly within a three-year time frame.
3. Faculty will be trained to use the *Competencies Module* in Moodlerooms to record multiple assessments of student learning outcomes across programs and departments. This software will improve the ability to collate information and analyze student learning outcomes more comprehensively.
4. More assessment-focused professional development opportunities will be provided and supported. At this time, in addition to having select faculty members attending a SUNY-sponsored workshop on assessment, we are also planning on hosting SUNY representatives for an assessment workshop on our campus.

With the above actions added for clarification, the College concurs and accepts the following requirements and recommendations and suggestions presented by the visitation team on October 13th.

Requirements:

1. The college must develop a documented, organized and sustained assessment process to improve student learning that has clear, realistic guidelines and timetables.

Recommendations:

1. The college should provide professional development and resources for faculty to learn how to assess student learning, how to improve their curricula and how to improve their teaching.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven J. Tyrell

Steve Tyrell, Ph.D.

President

North Country Community College