

Report to the  
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students

Of

**Mount Wachusett Community College**  
Gardner, Massachusetts

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 to the college  
April 1-4, 2012

**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

Date form completed: 3/20/12

Name of Institution Mount Wachusett Community College

1. **History** Year chartered or authorized November 1963 Year first degrees awarded June 1966

2. **Type of control:**  State  City  Other; specify: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Private, not-for-profit  Religious Group; specify: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Proprietary  Other; specify: \_\_\_\_\_

3. **Degree level:**  
 Associate  Baccalaureate  Masters  Professional  Doctorate

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

	Full-time	Part-time	FTE	Retention <sup>a</sup>	Graduation <sup>b</sup>	# Degrees <sup>c</sup>
Associate	1911	2365	2740.7	55%	16%	2011 Degrees conferred
Baccalaureate						
Graduate						

(a) full-time Fall 2010 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> year (b) 3 year graduation rate (c) no. of degrees awarded 2011

5. **Number of current faculty:** Full time 73 Part-time 390 FTE: 263

6. **Current fund data for most recently completed fiscal year:** (Specify year: Fiscal 2011)  
(Double click in any cell to enter spreadsheet. Enter dollars in millions; e.g., \$1,456,200 = \$1.456)

**Revenues**

Tuition	\$11,446.000
Gov't Appropriations	\$14,356.000
Gifts/Grants/Endowment	\$20,488.000
Auxiliary Enterprises	\$1,258.000
Other	\$1,554.000
Total	\$49,102.000

**Expenditures**

Instruction	\$14,101.000
Research	\$0.000
General	\$25,336.000
Auxiliary Enterprises	\$1,404.000
Other	\$2,856.000
Total	\$43,697.000

7. **Number of off-campus locations:**  
In-state 3 Other U.S. \_\_\_\_\_ International \_\_\_\_\_ Total \_\_\_\_\_

8. **Number of degrees and certificates offered electronically:**  
Programs offered entirely on-line \_\_\_\_\_ Programs offered 50-99% on-line \_\_\_\_\_

9. **Is instruction offered through a contractual relationship?**  
 No  Yes; specify program(s): \_\_\_\_\_

10. **Other characteristics:**

## **Introduction**

The CIHE Evaluation Team visited Mount Wachusett Community College (MWCC) for a comprehensive evaluation from April 1 to April 4. The last comprehensive Self-Study and comprehensive visit occurred in 2002, with a five-year Interim Report submitted by the College in April, 2007.

The Team was graciously received by all areas of the College, from the opening reception and dinner on Sunday evening to the closing meeting on Wednesday morning. The Self-Study was prepared by cross-functional teams for each of the eleven Standards, with input from the entire campus through Blackboard sites and college email. The diversity of the teams was evident in the keen level of interest in and knowledge about the Evaluation process by the entire College. The CIHE Evaluation Team met as a whole, in small groups and individually with many of the College Self-Evaluation Teams, with leadership teams, Department Chairs, Division Chairs, a variety of administrators, faculty, Board Trustees, Foundation Trustees, staff, and students. The entire Team met with the Executive Council; most of the Team met with five of the Board of Trustees; most of the Team participated in the two Open Forum Faculty sessions, one Open Forum for Staff, and one Open Forum Student session, each attended by some 50 people. In addition, individual Team members or pairs met with the Board Chair, the various Chairs of the Self-Evaluation Standards, the Institutional Planning and Effectiveness Director, the Director of Articulation and Assessment, the Vice President of Administrative Services, and numerous other individuals and committees. Three of the Team traveled to the Leominster and Devens Instructional Sites, and one to the Fitchburg site, interviewing staff, faculty, and students. In all, the Team connected with at least 200 people.

In addition to on-site interaction with the MWCC community, the Team reviewed the Self-Study Report, the catalog (print and online), the Strategic Plan for 2011-2014, the many College publications, minutes for key administrative bodies, Academic Department Reports, Financial Reports, Course Syllabi, and various planning documents. College personnel were very helpful in arranging meetings and in providing information to help us fill in any gaps. The Self-Study included many links to online materials, facilitating the Team's review both before and during the visit.

The CIHE Evaluation Team wishes to express its appreciation for a well-written, thoughtful Self-Study and a well-planned Evaluation visit. Clearly, Mount Wachusett operates in a mindful, deliberative manner, with a high degree of self-understanding. The following report addresses each of the eleven Standards for Accreditation of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges and summarizes the strengths and concerns identified by the Team.

## *1. Mission and Purposes*

When Mt. Wachusett Community College was founded in 1963, the major focus of the College was to prepare students for transfer to baccalaureate institutions. Built on former farmland, the College became a community hub for rural north central Massachusetts. Over the years, the local community has become increasingly diverse, socially and economically, including a population comprised of immigrants, particularly Hispanic, and dislocated workers. The mission of the College has been periodically reframed and redirected to reflect the needs of the community and the general economy of the region. The latest iteration was adopted in 2010 as part of a strategic planning process, resulting in the 2011-2014 Strategic Plan. The Mission is expressed in a concrete, precise, well-articulated statement that expresses the character of the college, and that is supported by five principles:

- Teaching and Learning Excellence
- Potential for Success
- Supportive Learning Environment
- Responsive, Relevant, and High Quality Programs and Services
- Community Engagement, Development, and Impact

A set of seven core values describes the culture encouraged by the College to assure a fertile learning environment.

While the Mission/Principles/Values are unique to Mt. Wachusett, they fall under the umbrella of and are in alignment with the mission for the community colleges in the State of Massachusetts's Commonwealth's Public Higher Education System. This mission, approved by the Department of Higher Education, identifies five goals of community college education: transfer, career preparation, developmental courses to prepare for college-level courses, job retraining, and lifelong learning. These goals are centered around access, affordability, responsiveness, and excellence in a climate of respect and support.

The Mount Wachusett Community College mission is printed in many publications, and the principles and values are displayed throughout the College. Faculty, staff, and students are able to express, with concrete examples, the elements of the mission and how it shapes the College environment.

**Institutional Effectiveness:** The College reviews its mission, principles, and values for relevance, appropriateness, and usefulness along with its strategic planning process; the 2009 process led to adoption of the current mission and plan, and a cross-college ad hoc committee is being populated to begin the next strategic planning process in the fall of 2012.

## *2. Planning and Evaluation*

**Planning:** Mount Wachusett Community College (MWCC) has successfully institutionalized planning and evaluation in every part of the organization. Although the

level of planning is not consistent across all units, at the core is the well-documented and properly implemented Strategic Plan, which provides an overarching framework. MWCC also has extensive documentation of planning activities in academic affairs (program review, retention plan, assessment plan and graduate survey), student support service (admissions, enrollment management, library, student success, CCSSE, SENSE, and Noel-Levitz), and business administration (communication, grant development, diversity, and technology). All the planning activities are meaningfully related to its mission statement and its core values. Clearly, MWCC has a culture of evidence for planning and evaluation that serves as a powerful mechanism to achieve organizational effectiveness.

Faculty, staff, and management are heavily involved in the planning activities, as indicated in the planning documents and confirmed in the interviews. The Strategic Plan 2011-2014 project became more participatory than the Strategic Plan 2005-2010 project as a result of the learning experience that was accumulated from the first planning project.

MWCC has also been conducting its annual plan process since 2005. Each annual plan illustrates the completion of the full planning cycle (design-action-assessment). It extensively reports the establishment of all the planning goals in the beginning of a year. A mid-year report indicates the status of progress of all these strategic initiatives. Finally, there is a report that assesses the accomplishment of these initiatives by the end of the year.

The Institutional Research Office responds to the frequent data requests from MWCC's stakeholders, and it is also responsible for the provision of student success data and program review data as well as the publication of Data Scoops every semester. Set in a newsletter format, Data Scoops is communicated to the college community, publishing the aggregated data of enrollment, retention, and persistence at the program and institutional levels. The Office appears to have reached its full working capacity.

In addition to the Director of Institutional Research and her assistant, MWCC has two offices that have other kinds of institutional research functionalities. First, the Director of Assessment is responsible for designing and implementing a comprehensive system by which student learning (learning outcomes and general education core competencies) can be objectively measured. Second, the Director of Institutional Effectiveness coordinates all the activities that are related to strategic planning and annual planning.

Although the state appropriations have been declining substantially, MWCC is still maintaining a healthy financial record. Part of this success is due to the accurate prediction of the declining state financial support and the successful planning in generating alternative revenues, such as winning grant awards and creating significant income from the division of continuing education (DCE). One concern is that the College relies heavily on grants; the transient nature of these funding could potentially put the institution financially at risk. However, MWCC segregates grant funding from

the general funding. In addition, its reserve of 4.7 million dollars could be used should a budget shortfall occur.

Although the administration has been conscientious of their commitment to diversity and tremendous effort has been made to diversify the faculty and staff, MWCC does not document in its Diversity Plan the hiring and promotion of the people with diverse background. However, it is the geographical isolation of the institution that creates an enormous challenge to retain the faculty with diverse background.

**Evaluation:** MWCC regularly employs an extensive set of evaluation tools to assess the accomplishment of its mission of teaching and learning: student evaluation, graduation survey, Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), and teaching evaluation. Although learning outcomes and general education core competences are not yet fully implemented at the institutional level, progress has been made. These evaluation tools are basically quantitative in nature. MWCC also regularly evaluates its faculty for the improvement of teaching and learning. These evaluations are qualitative in nature.

The Board of Trustees conducted an assessment of the mission statement, fundamental principles, and core values as part of the strategic planning process in the years of 2009 and 2010. The Board also evaluates the President's managerial performance every year.

The Executive Council, comprised of MWCC's leadership, makes decisions that are aligned with the Strategic and Annual Plans and based on their extensive gathering of data.

While the professionally accredited programs perform their review in compliance to the standards of their professional accreditation agencies, the non-accredited programs conduct their own comprehensive program review every five years. Although a few reviews are not conducted on time and the adoption of the external perspective is still a challenge for some, comprehensive program review is overall performed very professionally.

Graduate surveys have been consistently collected over many years and data have been fed back to the academic community for program improvement. MWCC also tracks graduates who transfer to four-year institutions, and that information is also folded into program review. In addition, program gainful employment information is currently available to the public on MWCC's website.

**Institutional Effectiveness:** Abundant evidence indicates that MWCC effectively designs and implements the planning and evaluation processes. These processes are continuous for further accomplishment of the mission.

### *3. Organization and Governance*

The Organization and Governance structure of MWCC are appropriate to the institution, are the purview of the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education and the MWCC Board of Trustees and are set forth in the college's organizational chart. Lines of authority are clearly defined, membership opportunities in governance for faculty, staff and students are well understood and explained in the various college handbooks. In addition to the formal structure, informal task forces and committees are easily created, allowing flexibility and responsiveness to the institution's needs. The culture of the college is one of openness, communication and collaboration, evidenced by the open forums and access to minutes of all committees on the iConnect Portal. The President sets the example by making communication a priority and other leadership positions on the campus follow this lead.

The college has identified a need to improve communication not just up and down the governance structure but across and among positions and areas in the organization. The President and the Executive Council effectively model communication and accessibility. The President's door is open to all members of the college community. Improvement needs to be made at the mid-management level of the organization. For example, because of some communication lags, there appears to be some confusion about the role of new hires resulting from successful grant activity. As new grant funded programs and positions immerse themselves into the culture this may be ameliorated.

The Board of Trustees is charged by Massachusetts State Law to assume duties in four areas: personnel, fiscal, academic, and general authority. Ten members of the Board are appointed by the Governor to 5 year terms and one is elected by MWCC students. No member of the Board has any financial interest in MWCC. Through standing committees, like the Finance and Audit Committee, the Board assures fiscal solvency, balances the annual budget, maintains authority over fees and manages unrestricted assets to insure that the institution has the necessary funds for new academic programs, to upgrade equipment and technology and to maintain and improve facilities. These activities support the institution in accomplishing its mission and goals. The Board also appoints and evaluates the President annually per Massachusetts General Chapter Law.

The Board make-up reflects the close knit rural community and Board members reported that many serve on numerous local Boards this giving them a well-defined sense of the economic significance of "The Mount". This is reflected in their strong focus on Finance and Audit duties and their strong support of the additional parts of the mission that lead the college to focus on Community Outreach in local schools. In addition Board members are very aware and very proud of the Community Service and Service learning focus of the college. Other aspects of the Board duties were less well defined. Operations related to personnel and Academic Programs appeared to take the form of presentations to the Board for approval or action; however, it is unclear how the Board critically reviews these issues.

One concern is the lack of any formal Board evaluation process. While Board members have in the past few years completed a self-evaluation survey one time, there was no clear process of how the survey results were used nor is there a clear plan for annual Board evaluation.

The President has ultimate authority for the quality of educational programs, financial stability, regulatory compliance, and insures that the institution is enforcing its admissions regulations. Further he supervises planning, budget preparation, maintenance of the physical plant, risk assessment and recommends all faculty appointments to the Board of Trustees. He sets the tone for the college and both he and the Executive Council practice a transparent model of leadership that places high value on communication throughout the organization. An example of this is his regular presentations to the MWCC Assembly about issues of importance to the community.

The President is evaluated annually by the Board of Trustees. The Board Evaluation Committee is responsible for the process of the Presidential evaluation and reports the results of the evaluation to the full Board.

The Academic Vice President reports directly to the President and works with faculty, and the Academic Affairs Committee to propose new programs and assess the effectiveness of existing programs including those offered through the college's Distance Education program. The voice of the faculty is strong in matters related to the maintenance and development of the academic program. Faculty also participate actively in personnel decisions through a search committee process for new full time Faculty hires.

How the day program reports to Department Chairs, Division Deans and ultimately the Academic Vice President is well defined. It is less clear how the DCE credit courses are aligned with the academic structure as they report to a separate Vice President. This is further confused in that full time faculty who serve as Department Chairs have no formal connection to the adjuncts hired by DCE to teach the credit DCE courses nor do they have responsibility over the quality of the academic program offered through DCE. This structure could raise a question of the integrity of the academic program across all of its various delivery sites and modes; however, because of the robust informal process of collegial collaboration between the two areas of Academic Affairs and Life Long Learning, there is a regular partnership of interviewing and reviewing adjunct faculty in many of the content areas.

MWCC has a Student Government Association whose by-laws emphasize the welfare of the students and the participation of students in the educational process. They promote the development in leadership skills in students, manage the student funds and provide an open forum for discussion of issues that impact students. A meeting with students in leadership positions verified that students feel that they have a voice at "The Mount". They spoke highly of the quality of the faculty and the passion of the staff in supporting student success. The governance structure is explained in the Student Handbook and in the Constitution and By Laws of groups, like the Assembly, MACER, and various Standing Committees of the institution. A recent review of the constitution and by-laws

of the Assembly was accepted by campus constituencies and ultimately approved by the President. The college intends that this will be done more frequently in the future.

The college has also committed to engaging more faculty and staff from the satellite sites in active participation in the governance process. Assembly meetings are held on the first Monday of the month. Previously if faculty wanted to participate in the Assembly they had to teach on a Tuesday /Thursday schedule in order to permit adequate time to travel to Gardner for Assembly meetings. This fall the satellite sites added a video conferencing ability which has enhanced the ability of satellite faculty and staff to attend Assembly meetings. The employees at both of sites that were visited by the team verified that more are attending and participating in the Assembly because of this use of the video conferencing technology.

**Institutional Effectiveness:** Governance at MWCC is straightforward and open, supporting communication at all levels from the Board of Trustees to the President to the Executive Council and the Assembly. While open communication as evidenced by the open door policy of the President and Vice Presidents, is highly valued, the College has identified this as one area that they want to continue to improve and has metrics in place to evaluate and measure this progress.

The Governing Board operates independently, is active, informed and committed to the college and its mission; however the Board needs to develop and formalize a process to periodically evaluate itself to both document and assure its effectiveness.

#### *4. The Academic Program*

**Introduction, Undergraduate Education and the Major or Concentration:** Mount Wachusett Community College (MWCC) offers a variety of certificate and associate degree programs. The associate degree programs are in general education, health sciences and other career path programs. There are 26 associate of arts and science degrees (six with concentrations), 20 certificate program options, and six additional options. The largest degree majors are in Business Administration, Business Administration Career Track, Computer Information Systems, Criminal Justice, Early Childhood Career Education/Child Development, General Studies, Human Services, Liberal Arts and Sciences, and Nursing.

The Automotive Technology program includes a working automotive repair and assessment facility on the grounds of the main campus. An example of a new associate degree program offered is the Automotive Technology Degree-GM Option. This is a selective program preparing the student for General Motors' Certified Automotive Technician. The advisory committee provided the impetus to design this option. Admission requirements are noted in the Catalog, along with transfer options, special requirements, career options and earning potential.

The approval process for new/revised courses and programs is well understood by the representative faculty. The established approval process is carried through the Academic Affairs Committee. This committee is active and holds regularly scheduled

meetings. It is also responsible for the thorough review and analysis of the scheduled academic program review and annual reviews submitted by departments.

Several majors and concentrations are offered during both the day and evening. The Devens Campus, Gardner Campus, and Leominster Campus offer specific courses for specialized programs. At the Devens Campus, the majority of the required courses for Biotechnology/Bio-manufacturing, Energy Management, General Studies, Physical Therapist Assistant, and Medical Office are offered. The Gardner Campus offers the broadest range of courses for the associate degree, concentrations, and certificate options. Leominster offers General Studies, Human Services, Paralegal, Business Administration, and Accounting. The Burbank (Fitchburg) Satellite offers the Dental Hygiene specialty courses.

There are a number of programs in which the majority of courses can be accessed in an online format: Accounting, Allied Health Concentration, Broadcasting and Electronic Media, Business Administration, Communications Track, Computer Information Systems, Fire Science Technology (fully online), General Studies, History and Political Science Track, Human Services (including Human Service Technician), Liberal Arts and Sciences, Office Assistant, Paralegal Studies, Photography Concentration, and Pre-engineering track. The Online format includes 81 courses as well as fully online degree program offerings. Certificate programs that are offered fully online are Paralegal, Business Administration, and Small Business Management.

In discussion with faculty representatives, there is confirmation that department chairs monitor the rigor of courses, regardless of mode of delivery. Faculty have taken steps to reduce the likelihood of violation of exam security in online courses, and some online courses require on-campus testing. Distance courses follow the established course description, learning outcomes, and conduct required course evaluations, as do the traditional course offerings. There is awareness, as expressed by some faculty and staff during the site-visit, of an informal process to engage evening and distance education faculty in discussions at the department level to support course consistency.

Students have an opportunity to have previous learning assessed and credits awarded following evaluation of the experiential learning. There are also recognized assessment methods such as Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support Subjects (DANTES) Standardized Tests, College Level Examination Program (CLEP), life-experience credit, and department challenge examinations.

Students must demonstrate compliance with the residency requirement of 50 percent of their selected program to be awarded a degree or certificate from MWCC. This is reflected in the Catalog, along with program mission and goals, being well outlined and consistent across programs.

Due to a decline in enrollment in a few programs, a comprehensive review with focus groups, and an examination of trending data both locally and nationally, including Department of Labor and Training reports, has been conducted. Meetings with the advisory boards, which are composed of a majority of external members representing

the specific career field, were also used as a component for the program analysis. Input from marketing relative to program promotion, along with the results from annual and scheduled program reviews, are used to determine the final recommendation for program continuation and/or restructuring. Advisory Boards/Committees are considered integral to the College environment and their advice is seriously considered. This was evident in a review of selected minutes and in discussions with academic deans, chairs, and faculty.

There is a consistent process in place to determine program continuance or closure that is included in the five-year academic program review (APR). This process includes a broad range of communities of interest, including external advisory committees and internal reviews. Following a fall 2011 pilot review of the History Program, plans are underway for the General Education departments that support the core curriculum to be reviewed on a five-year schedule beginning fall 2012. The Executive Council reviews the information presented and provides leadership input. Communication is driven via a number of mechanisms, including individual members going back to their areas of responsibility and providing updates and soliciting input.

**General Education:** The College has established a general education core curriculum, described in the current Catalog. The student has a choice between a transfer degree core of 30-33 general education credits or a career degree core with 23-25 general education credits. A review of selected programs reveals compliance with this requirement. A noted discrepancy was found in public information concerning the Dental Hygiene program which is listed as a 67 credit program; however, an examination of the prerequisite courses indicates an additional 17 credits, bringing the total credits for the program at 84 credits.

A process for academic program review (APR) was formalized in 2006, with each program reviewing itself every five years, in addition to producing an annual report. Three programs are in the cycle for review for 2012: Early Childhood Education, Business Administration, and Complementary Health Care. Slated for review in 2013 are Computer Information Systems, Broadcasting and Telecommunications, Criminal Justice, Computer Graphic Design, and Art. The Massachusetts Department of Higher Education requires new programs to be reviewed within one year of graduation of the first class. The Energy Management program, for instance, will be reviewed in the fall of 2012 and then every five years. The Fire Science program is scheduled for review in 2013, which is within one year of the graduation of the first class under the new Fire and Emergency Services Higher Education (FESHE) accredited curriculum. In 2009, the Fire Science program had been reviewed for program health due to consistently low enrollments. It was then FESHE certified and accepted its first class in the fall of 2011.

Faculty who were interviewed identified the value of the APR process, including the annual reports, as they believe it provides focus on the goals and areas to be achieved and refined. Also included in all program reviews is an analysis of the inclusion of MWCC's four general education "educated person" competencies, identified in the Self Study and Catalog.

Nine programs hold specialty accreditation: Automotive, Clinical Laboratory Science, Dental Assisting and Dental Hygiene, Medical Assistant, Associate Degree Nursing and Practical Nursing, Physical Therapist Assistant, and Yoga. This accreditation requires a predetermined rigorous external review process in which programs must meet or exceed standards of the specialty discipline. A former program, Massage Therapy, had also held Commission on Massage Therapy Accreditation until April 2012, when it was voluntarily surrendered as the program was closed.

A representative from the TRIO (RX and Visions) grant programs identified the assistance given to 40 students at MWCC and identified improved retention and persistence due to the program interventions. A robust number of supportive resources are available to students: faculty advising, counseling services, disabilities services, and career and technical education (Perkins) program and the ASPIRE project.

Articulation with baccalaureate programs is a priority at MWCC. The college indicates in the Self Study a 3-year option with articulation for the 4<sup>th</sup> year at a number of private senior colleges/universities. A review of documents revealed an expansive number of additional articulations with colleges and high schools.

**Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit:** It is clearly established that the expectation for each credit course offered at MWCC meets for “one college hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of and has a minimum of 2 hours of out-of-class student work each week for 15 weeks for one semester of credit or equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time.” This policy is published in the catalog, and is followed in traditional, hybrid, and fully-online course offerings. In discussions with faculty the Team is assured that there is an understanding of the policy. A concern was expressed in faculty meetings relative to lack of consistency across course sections regardless of mode, time, and site of delivery. However faculty and department chairs also indicated collaboration among faculty as a whole, and a review of syllabi available during the site visit, revealed consistent course descriptions, objectives, prerequisites, teaching procedures, grading policies, assessments, attendance, classroom conduct, ADA statement, and class schedule.

**Assessment of Student Learning:** An Assessment Plan (2011) was available for review which clearly describes the mission of the Outcomes Committee, the general education competencies, assessment questions, and analysis with established timelines for completion and submission along with redesign suggestions and information about the manner in which the findings are to be reported to the Assembly, VP of Academic Affairs, Department Chairs and Deans. One example of changes made in response to assessment findings is the Computer Graphic Design program: in response to faculty and professional juror portfolio assessment, the program was revised to align competencies to industry standards, and the computer labs were modernized. In the Biotechnology/Biomanufacturing program, the department and the advisory board reviewed laboratory exams and the Capstone course; they decided to add solution preparation and the associated math into every BTC course and to make laboratory techniques consistent.

Additional data used for program analysis includes licensure rates; retention and graduation rates; and surveys of students, graduates, and employers. Documents reviewed on-site verified the outcome data for program improvement.

**Institutional Effectiveness:** Several institutional committees take an active role in collecting, analyzing, and trending data to inform program improvement. In addition, there is dedicated institutional effort to strengthen student success through faculty advisement, and collaboration among the wide array of resources available. The College community is committed to resolution of the challenges noted in the Self Study and there is evidence this is an ongoing, dynamic process.

### *5. Faculty*

Mount Wachusett Community College has a faculty of 73 full-time and 390 adjunct faculty members during the 2011-2012 academic year. The faculty expertise spans from the liberal arts to professional and medical programs distributed over three academic schools: the School of Business, Science, and Technology; the School of Health Sciences and Community Service Programs; as well as the School of Liberal Arts, Math, and Education. Among the full time faculty, 15 hold doctoral degrees, 54 hold masters' degrees, 3 hold bachelors' degrees, and one faculty member has less than a bachelor's degree. With an FTE of 2956.5 students, the student to faculty ratio is 21:1. The faculty members are well qualified and are suited to the field and level of their assignments though the College relies considerably on adjunct faculty for teaching many of the courses offered. Indeed, the report from the College shows that the proportion adjunct faculty hired has been increasing.

While the number of adjunct faculty hired during the 2005-2010 increased by 32 percent, the number of full-time faculty increased by six percent during the same period. The College offers a number of ways for adjuncts to participate in the life of the College. For over ten years, MWCC has held an August professional development workshop for adjuncts; adjuncts are encouraged to attend all professional development activities at the College throughout the year; a semester meeting schedule and invitation is provided to all adjuncts; adjuncts are also invited to advisory board meetings in their disciplines; and some departments have Blackboard sites to share syllabi and various pedagogical activities. With many robust grant-supported initiatives, MWCC also includes adjuncts to participate; 30% of Title III and 60% of the Lumina faculty participants are adjunct. The Teaching and Learning Center supports adjunct faculty in learning Blackboard and course design. Though engaging adjunct faculty due to work schedules can be challenging, MWCC makes an ongoing effort to integrate them. The College anticipates that more use of Blackboard and the portal will strengthen collegiality.

Full-time, day faculty are members of the Massachusetts Community College Council/Massachusetts Teachers Association (MCCC/MTA) and their terms of employment are negotiated with the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE). Adjunct faculty have a separate agreement which was negotiated between the MCCC/MTA and the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education. The conditions of

service for full time faculty are codified in the MCCC Day Agreement 2010-2013 while the terms of adjunct faculty are codified in the MCCC DCE Agreement 2010-2013. Full-time faculty hold and can be promoted through the ranks of instructor, assistant professor, associate professor, and professor. The responsibilities of full-time faculty in addition to instructional workload include non-instructional workload such as advising students, curriculum development, institutional governance, and other special projects.

Based on the MCCC Day Agreement, full-time faculty carry a minimum workload of 29 and maximum of 35 units of instruction per week with no more than three course preparations semester and five preparations per year. In addition to other non-instructional responsibilities, faculty are expected to advise up to 18 students and maintain four office hours per week. Dissatisfaction with advising remains a concern because faculty members feel that they have not been given the tools to effectively advise students. The College plans to address these concerns during the five-year span of the ASPIRE project. Adjunct faculty can teach up to five courses per semester, have an obligation to be available to students by appointment, and are expected to attend faculty meetings each semester.

The College has an orderly faculty recruitment process and faculty participate in the search process. The College reports that it adheres to State and Federal laws regarding equal opportunity and affirmative action. However, the College recognizes the lack of racial/ethnic diversity among its faculty. Though MWCC has developed some initiatives that it hopes will help to foster diversity in its faculty ranks, it reports that the relatively few vacancies in faculty positions during the past ten years and its geographic location have not made it possible for the College to more effectively diversify. Further, while the College demonstrates its commitment to diversity through written statements and organization of several multicultural workshops, it does not have a clearly articulated plan or target goals for achieving diversity among its faculty. The collective bargaining agreement of full-time faculty provides reasonable contractual security. During the first four years of service, their appointment can be terminated without cause. Upon satisfactory completion of six years of service full-time faculty become eligible for tenure and the process for attaining tenure status is clearly delineated in the MCCC Day Agreement.

The MCCC Day Agreement and the MCCC DCE Agreement have provisions for fostering the academic freedom of faculty. Faculty members have opportunity to participate in the governance of the College via the Mount Wachusett Community College Assembly. The Constitution and By-laws of this Assembly makes provision for input of faculty in decision making at the College. The Assembly meets monthly during the academic year and is presided over by the chairperson who is usually a faculty member elected by the Assembly. Non-faculty members may serve as chairperson if there is no faculty member willing to serve in this capacity. The Assembly chairperson also serves on the College President's Executive Council. The constitution of the Assembly also makes provision for two faculty members from each of the academic schools to serve on the standing committees of the Assembly with the exception of the Academic Affairs Committee. The Academic Affairs Committee, also a standing committee of the

Assembly and whose membership includes both faculty and administrators, has responsibility for reviewing course and program offerings. Proposals for development of educational programs usually originate from an individual faculty and/or academic department, are submitted to the appropriate academic school for support, and are then forwarded to the Academic Affairs Committee for final approval. Meetings of the Assembly under the current Constitution has promoted collegiality and communication among members of the college community particularly at the Gardner campus but this has not extended to faculty at the Devens and Leominster campuses. There are also numerous standing and ad hoc committees in which faculty participate.

MWCC reports its commitment to professional development as an institutional strength and the College organizes a professional development day each semester. Also the College spends a minimum of \$50,000 on professional development activities for full-time faculty, academic administration, and professional staff annually. However, faculty have found the process for accessing the funds to be confusing and a Professional Development Committee that was established to address this issue disbanded due to limited travel funds available in the budget. The committee was re-established in 2011 but it is uncertain whether the issues related process for accessing the funds or limited travel funds is being addressed.

The college has equitable and broad-based procedures for the evaluation of its faculty. The MCCC Day Agreement specifies the six components for faculty evaluation and relative weight of each component. Non-tenured faculty are evaluated on all components annually until gaining tenure. Non-tenured faculty are evaluated every third year. Adjunct faculty are evaluated by their students in every course each semester and are observed in the classroom at once every three years.

**Institutional Effectiveness:** The effectiveness of the faculty is comprehensively assessed in terms of several components including teaching, advising, college service, and course materials and the results obtained are utilized in promotion and tenure decisions as well as overall enhancement of teaching and learning at the College.

## 6. *Students*

**Admissions and Financial Aid:** MWCC attracts students primarily from the north central region of Massachusetts. With an open admissions policy, the College is guided by the New England Association for College Admissions Counseling, accepting applicants with approved high school or General Equivalency Diplomas or by satisfying an Ability to Benefit requirement. Healthcare Professions programs are selective, with requirements published in the *College Catalog and Handbook*. Enrollment growth increased steadily from 2008-2010 and leveled off at close to a 5000 unduplicated head count in 2011. MWCC has also become increasingly diverse, reflecting the growing diversity of the north central region of the State. In fall 2011, 25% of the 4,755 student body belonged to a minority group, primarily Hispanic. Nearly half were part-time, 62% were first-generation college students, and 65% work part time. The average age of an MWCC student is 28. Policies and procedures regarding the application, admission and registration process are clearly and explicitly stated on the College's

website, in its College Catalog & Student Handbook, and in a variety of collateral materials that are made available to prospective students. While Mount Wachusett Community College is primarily an open access institution, there are several programs of study where selective admission practices are applied (e.g. Nursing, Automotive Technology.) In these cases the selection criteria and enrollment requirements are clearly identified and widely available.

An extensive collection of data related to applications, acceptances and new student enrollment informs admission efforts, and particular strategies are identified as a result. The Division of Marketing and Communications is an integral partner in this effort. Generation and use of this data is an area of emphasis for the relatively new Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Financial Aid. He expects to use this data in increasingly meaningful ways to guide the work of the Admissions Department.

The Financial Aid office provides over \$16 million in aid, the vast majority of which is derived from federal grants and loans. Information about how to access this aid is clear and easily accessible via sources such as the web site and a Financial Aid brochure. The department is adequately staffed and well managed as evidenced by the results of annual audits of the department. At one point in time there had been concerns about a high default rate on loans, but this was remedied by the implementation of default management strategies.

**Retention, Graduation, and Other Measures of Student Success:** The College produces extensive data on retention and graduation. These rates are examined for each program of study and are broken down to examine differences between and among various cohorts (full time v. part time, gender, minority status, ESL, and other socio-economic variables.) Those variables which are shown to have a negative impact on retention and graduation are addressed by a variety of intentional strategies. MWCC's retention and graduation rates are lower than the Institution would like them to be: overall fall 2010-fall 2011 first-time full-time degree seeking retention was 55%, and the fall 2008 graduation rate was 15%. The College has successfully sought a number of grants to support work in this area, such as the Title III Academic Success Project to Increase Retention and Engagement (ASPIRE) which will aid in the development of a planning and monitoring system where students and advisors can track progress toward student goals.

Recognizing that retention and graduation are not the only measures of student success the College uses a more extensive method to gain useful information. The College utilizes a method known as the "Maryland Model" which includes other variables such as transfer, credit attainment, and continuous enrollment to compute a measure of student success which is more meaningful for community college students. The measure of student success generated using this method is benchmarked against that of other community colleges in Massachusetts.

It was stated during the campus visit that the College would not diminish its academic standards, but would make every effort possible to help students achieve them. The

vast array of support services which are provided in various ways at multiple locations is testimony that the College takes this pledge seriously.

Many of these efforts occur prior to enrollment and are the result of partnerships with area high school and middle schools. The Division of Access and Transition sponsors 15 grant funded programs serving 14 schools and over 40 communities. These programs include dual enrollment, Educational Talent Search, Gateway to College, Early College and GEAR UP. In all of these programs the emphasis is on providing students with the skills, supports, and encouragement necessary to pursue higher education whether that is at Mount Wachusett Community College or elsewhere.

In addition to these pre-college, external programs, a comprehensive collection of campus based programs are offered as well. Two TRIO programs provide an array of support services for qualifying students, with one of these focusing exclusively on students in the health sciences. A Title III program known as ASPIRE identifies students with known risk factors at the point of admission and informs their advisors of particular interventions which can be recommended to the student in order to improve their chances of success. More traditional programs are offered as well including Adult Basic Education, ESOL, GED, academic advising, orientation, career services, tutoring, personal counseling, health services, disability services, veterans' services, etc. ACCUPLACER testing is used to determine the students' abilities in reading, writing and math, and students who are deficient in these areas are placed in developmental level courses so that they can master the basic skills needed to be successful in college level coursework.

**Student Services:** Complementing these support services is a robust collection of co-curricular programs. Comprehensive, multi-leveled student leadership development programs, an active student government and a collection of clubs and organizations bring faculty, staff and students together to create a vibrant campus life. The breadth and depth of the activities which are offered through these programs is truly impressive.

Students taking classes at any of the off campus locations are also provided with the benefit of these services. The College has pledged that any service provided on campus will be offered in a comparable fashion at off campus locations. Visits to these off campus locations and discussions with staff and students during these visits have confirmed this claim.

Student policies, procedures and compliance related notices are fully and clearly communicated via a variety of print and electronic media.

**Institutional Effectiveness:** The College generates extensive and appropriate data and information to guide the establishment of its strategic enrollment management goals and objectives, and to then assess its effectiveness in achieving them. Nationally normed survey instruments have been used to measure student engagement and to determine student satisfaction with programs and services. Data is regularly collected to identify the level of participation in the many types of student activities, and in some

cases assessment addresses the explicitly stated learning outcomes of programs such as student leadership development and orientation. Grant funded support programs often identify and assess predetermined, desired outcomes.

## *7. Library & Other Information Resources*

**Library:** The LaChance Library is an integral and popular aspect of the College's academic community and serves as a critical component of the students' educational experience at MWCC. The Library is attractive, inviting, and comfortable, with many windows and a variety of soft seating and study areas. The Library has one main level which seats 49 library users and a mezzanine level which seats 167 library users. Additionally, there are two open computer labs, a library instruction classroom, three video preview private study rooms, a group study room, a language lab, and an adaptive computer lab. The College's Academic Support Center is also located within the Library. A Director of Academic Support Services oversees its tutoring services and staff.

A Dean of Library and Academic Support supervises a team of professional librarians, the Director and staff of Academic Support Services, and the Library's paraprofessional staff. She is also currently serving as the Interim Dean of Liberal Arts, Math, Education, and Developmental Studies. With the support of an interim Coordinator for the Library, she splits her time between these two positions. She is committed to overseeing all areas equitably, in order to continue the College's mission.

The Library's book and e-resource collection is sufficient to serve the number of students, faculty, staff, and community borrowers. The Library is wheelchair accessible and seeks to improve its accessibility through continuous renovation. The Library budget and staffing levels are adequate for the provision of resources and services for students, faculty, staff, and community users.

The repurposing of Library space for tutoring services has led to the shifting of the book collections and the movement of Reference books to the circulating collection for more student study space. It has also led to increased use of Library space by students and the need for additional quiet areas for serious studiers and more individual and group study rooms. It is hoped that the new Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) building will allow the Library to expand its footprint and add new quiet study spaces, more computer lab space, and more private study rooms.

The Library is open 61 hours per week and includes evenings. A Library website provides 24/7 access to the databases for students, staff, and faculty as well as to a variety of librarian-created subject guides which align with many of the courses taught at the College. Additional access to materials is available through interlibrary loan as well as through consortia lending via the Academic and Research Collaborative of Central Massachusetts. The Library is also a member of the Central/Western Massachusetts Automated Resource Sharing consortium (C/WMARS), as well as of the Massachusetts Library System, which coordinates frequent deliveries of system-wide holds to member libraries.

One of the goals from the Library's strategic plan is to support the "one college" philosophy and to this end, there is one librarian who is assigned to serve students and faculty at two of the College's satellite campuses (perhaps all three). In addition, the Library is working on partnering with the local public library to serve MWCC students at these campuses by

stocking the public library with academic resources, a collection of course-related Reserve materials, and possible access to some of the MWCC databases.

**Information and Technological Literacy:** Information Literacy, as one of the College's four core competencies, is a major focus of the Library's strategic planning. The institutional commitment to information literacy strengthens the goals found in the Library's Information Literacy Strategic Plan:

- To support the academic curriculum by helping students develop necessary information seeking skills;
- To play a key role in providing students and faculty access to relevant and appropriate information tools and resources.
- To further inclusion of the information literacy competency into academic disciplines, including developmental courses.

A number of data sets demonstrate the library's commitment to continuous improvement:

- Surveys such as the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory, LibQual, and the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), as well as student focus groups, describe students' perceptions of this Library as valued, necessary, and accommodating.
- The Library's previous five-year strategic plan has resulted in the successful completion of many of its goals, including the acquisition of relevant e-resources, the delivery of resources and services to the College's ancillary campuses, and collaboration with faculty on the inclusion of information literacy in the curricula of ENG 101 and CIS 127.
- The Library's annual usage statistics show growth in the Library's circulation of materials, library instruction classes, gate counts, database usage, website hits, and interlibrary loan transactions.

**Academic and Instructional Technology:** The College's Center for Teaching & Learning works with Academic Affairs, Life Long Learning, Information Technology, and Media Services to encourage the use and development of instructional methods and technology to enhance the quality of teaching and learning and institutional advancement.

The College's Information Technology mission is "to provide innovative, progressive technology that enables faculty, students and staff to have the best learning, teaching and working experience possible." To this end, there is a strategic plan to expand the number of distance learning and hybrid ("eLearning") courses offered via utilization of the Blackboard Learning Management System. Currently, almost 80% of on-campus courses now incorporate Blackboard, thus allowing students the ability to use information resources and technology as an integral part of their education.

The Department has also embedded an online mentoring component to the eLearning courses to help first-time students to persist and succeed in a distance education course. "Safe Assign" is an additional module for instructors to use when plagiarism is suspected.

Additionally, the College subscribes to e-Tutoring.org, an online tutoring platform that allows tutors to work with students in real time and provides the opportunity for students to submit essays for review and commentary.

Faculty and administrators describe the College's Instructional Technology staff members as "superb" in both their knowledge and skill, as well as in their responsiveness to the needs of the campus community. With the growth of faculty and staff interest in training and support on the Blackboard system, there has also been an increasing need to ensure that faculty, staff, and students have 24/7 assistance. Thus far, the staff has complied.

Additionally, campus needs for media and broadcast services have expanded to include large screen projection of commencement exercises and other College events, podcasts, service to satellite campuses, installations of Smart classrooms and multimedia classrooms, video production, and continued support of the Broadcasting and Electronic Media program. The increased need for media services for campus and community events, the growth in the need for Smart classrooms and educational technology, and the requisite training and support required for eLearning has not led to an equivalent increase in the number of staff.

**Institutional Effectiveness:** The Library is extremely popular with students, staff, and faculty, and there was consensus from all factions that the MWCC Library is a welcoming, helpful, well organized, relevant, and vibrant addition to the College. It has embraced an inquisitive approach to working toward goals based on the needs of the people it serves. There is also dedication to the support and improvement of the instructional education needs of the College, as noted by the number of courses utilizing Blackboard and number of training sessions. Additionally, there is consistent monitoring of the quality of the College's eLearning program to ensure that it meets the Sloan-C Quality Scorecard for the Administration of Online Education Programs. The increase in the number of eLearning courses meets students' needs for convenience and flexibility and allows multiple instructional modalities for faculty.

#### *8. Physical and Technological Resources*

Mt. Wachusett Community College consists of one main campus in Gardner on 269 acres of land. In addition, the college leases three satellite locations, the Leominster Campus in Leominster, the Devens Campus in Devens and the Burbank Campus in Fitchburg, MA.

The two most recent buildings on campus are the Robert D. Wetmore Center for Innovation in Design Technology, and Resource Development, completed in 2006 and the Garrison Child Care Center, completed in 2007. The Wetmore Center added classrooms, offices, and conference space onto the northwest side of the campus.

The Gardner campus buildings range widely in age, from 1974 for the main building to 2006 for the Wetmore Center. The main Gardner campus, however, needs a facelift due to aging infrastructure, exacerbated by the lack of deferred maintenance funds. The Gardner campus also appears to need more space to meet its needs, with the library sharing space with the Learning Center, and the cafeteria serving a dual purpose as a meeting room.

The college has made significant strides in improvements to existing buildings, most notably in the area of sustainability and energy conservation. All light fixture and light bulbs have been replaced with energy efficient LED replacements. The water bubblers have been replaced with Elkay Hydration Stations providing a bottle refilling area. All HVAC and other maintenance controls have been replaced with the Johnson Controls System permitting all areas of the college to be controlled via a web based network solution.

Both the Leominster and the Devens campus have had significant improvements, ranging from creating student space, library access, new carpeting, and the painting of the interior walls as well as renovating classroom space, with little or no state mandated deferred maintenance funds.

The College's strategic plan continues to develop a college-wide culture of conservation and concern for the environment. The college has been taking efforts to be greener, moving from pneumatic to digital controls, using green cleaning products and incorporating environmental concerns into all aspects of the campuses.

MWCC has made improvements in campus safety as well. The college has a full-time sworn officer who oversees a Campus Police Force. This position has responsibility for security, design of campus safety protocols, as well as ongoing training of safety procedures to the entire campus community.

The college completed a Campus Master Plan in 2007 with the Sieniewicz Architects and updated it in 2011. The Plan identified nine priority projects to send to the office of DCAM for funding; in February, 2012, the College was notified that the \$43.4 million earmarked for the Master Plan study through the Massachusetts Higher Education Bond Bill has been released. The college plans to adhere to the Master Plan's long-range goals, including constructing a new Science Building on the Gardner campus.

The IT and Media Services departments are responsible for maintaining the college's technology infrastructure. Currently wireless access is available in 95% of the Gardner campus and in 100% of the satellite campuses. This is a challenge in the all-concrete Gardner main building; however, the staff has made it possible. The wireless network is an open guest network.

College classrooms and labs are 74.2% smart rooms with the goal of 100% of all classrooms being converted over the next 3 years. With over 1400 computers on campus and a limited number of staff in place, it is hard to keep up with the demands of the technology.

The College is on a four-year computer replacement schedule with the multi-media equipment on a six-year cycle. The College has been very supportive in respect to funding all IT, multi-media and any classroom technology initiatives, even though funding is limited.

The goals of the information technology staff is the virtualization of desktops, moving to cloud computing, video streaming and bringing the Banner Student Information System in-house.

**Institutional Effectiveness:** The College has a clear plan for physical resources and is taking steps to improve technological resources even though the lack of State funding may impact the college's ability to sustain and improve both physical and technical resources.

### 9. *Financial Resources*

MWCC relies on operating revenues from sources similar to those of other public colleges: State appropriations, at an average at 27-35% (the higher figure, when funds are used to support full-time payroll because fringe benefits are covered by the State); tuition and fees, at 24%; Federal Stimulus money that backfilled State cuts in 2010 and 2011 but that did not cover fringe benefits; Grants, at 31%; and sundry other sources such as memberships to the Wellness Center and proceeds from Theater at the Mount ticket sales. State funding was reduced from \$15.77 million in 2007 to \$14.30 million in 2011. However, as a result of thoughtful management and aggressive grant seeking, MWCC has sufficient resources to meet the educational mission of the institution. Over the last several years, the College has been able to accumulate a positive fund reserve of \$4.7 million, overcoming years of financial deficiencies.

A review of the MWCC Statement of Net Assets indicates that the assets exceed the liabilities by \$ 5.1 million. The statement also reflects that the total net assets are capital assets and that \$ 3.9 million of its net assets are unrestricted.

MWCC has implemented caution in spending and has made some hard decisions in recent years to reduce the debt of the College. Annual debt service is \$700,000, with the majority of the debt relating to the wind turbine project; however, the annual debt service of \$600,000 on this project alone is offset by some \$700,000 in annual electric cost savings. Financial records indicate that FY11 financial resources are appropriately focused on the College's educational priorities. Expenditures for instruction, student services, scholarships, and academic support services represent 71%, or \$31 million, of the overall College expenditures.

The budget process has made positive advances in regards to the budget schedule and guidelines for each respective cost center. The cost centers are requested to base their budget requests on level funding from the previous year and are encouraged to prioritize and to tie their departmental requests to the strategic plan. The detailed requests are asked to be submitted back to the CFO by mid-January so that the Executive Council has enough time to validate their needs and vet the cost centers' requests.

The College continues to successfully receive a significant number of grants to support strategic initiatives and create an enhanced college experience, which in turn is reflected in the College's financial statement.

The MWCC Foundation, Inc. provides significant monetary support to the College in the form of scholarships \$300,000 annually, and to support small projects. The Board of Trustees for the College and the MWCC Foundation are enormous supporters of the College as a whole and find that the mission and goals are in-line with what the community wants and will continue to make every effort to keep the College a success with financial resources.

**Institutional Effectiveness:** Since there are mandatory and on-going system requirements in the form of external audit reports and evaluations, the college finances receive continual analysis within the institution and through Board of Trustees oversight. The Administrative services division performs continuous internal reviews, which include workflow processes, regulatory requirements and external audits.

#### *10. Public Disclosure*

The College used the self-study process as one means of determining the need for updating, branding, and contemporizing its array of print publications, including the College catalog, as well as the College website. This review of the College's marketing materials, public message, and online presence to both its community and to prospective students and visitors led to the beginning of a five-year integrated marketing plan and a host of clear, attractive, and comprehensive print and online publications. The primary responsibility for public relations, publications, and promotion lies with the Marketing and Communications Division in conjunction with other areas of the College, including (but not limited to) Admissions, Student Activities, Lifelong Learning, faculty, staff, students, and the administration. The Marketing and Communications Division's integrated plan is designed to promote the College's presence and visibility in the community as well as the dissemination of important College information for current and prospective students, parents and family, faculty and staff of the College, and visitors.

The College catalog provides the most comprehensive print compilation of information related to MWCC's policies, requirements, programs, and services. The website mirrors the contents of the catalog but also offers additional information and links to departmental and program web pages.

The five-year plan will ensure that new publications will be produced in a responsive and cost-effective way and that there will be consistently accurate and current information available. The Marketing plan is also intended to:

- involve campus stakeholders and constituencies in the design and inclusion of pertinent and relevant information;
- coincide with the mission and values of the College, particularly the "one college" philosophy;
- utilize data gleaned from qualitative and quantitative research, focus groups, surveys, and collaborative meetings;
- affect the College's enrollment and retention rates;
- represent the College's entrepreneurial spirit and vibrancy.

**Institutional Effectiveness:** The improvement of the public disclosure of College information will raise the reputation and general awareness of MWCC through clear, responsible, and consistent broad messaging, both internally and externally. The publications, both in print and online, will contain information that is complete, accurate, timely, accessible, clear and sufficient for intended audiences to make informed decisions about the college.

### *11. Integrity*

Mount Wachusett Community College conducts its affairs in keeping with the legal authority it has been granted, and in a fashion which is respectful of its faculty, staff, students and the community it serves.

Collective Bargaining Agreements govern the conditions of employment for faculty, staff and administration, and other employment related rules and regulations are overseen by a competent, adequately staffed Human Resources Office. The College demonstrates compliance with non-discrimination policies, and strives in its policies and practices to create a diverse workplace.

Provisions for academic honesty, integrity and freedom are clear and adequately promulgated. Provision for the fair and equitable resolution of grievances by faculty and staff are outlined in Collective Bargaining Agreements, and those for student grievances are outlined in the College Catalog and Student Handbook.

The College is fully cognizant of and compliant with its obligation to deal with NEASC's Commission on Institutions of Higher Education in a forthright, honest and cooperative fashion.

Perhaps most significantly, the College truly embraces and breathes life into the integrity standard. Integrity is one of the College's Core Values, and it pronounces its commitment to upholding this value in formal documents, banners around campus, and other ways. This commitment is evident in more than just words. Throughout the College community evidence of this value can be found in the deeds and action of the individuals which comprise this community and by the stories they tell of others. Integrity lives at Mount Wachusett Community College in visible and meaningful ways.

**Institutional Effectiveness:** It is expected that the College will periodically reconsider its Vision, Mission and Core Values; and that this might likely occur as part of the next Strategic Planning cycle.

### *Institutional Effectiveness Summary*

Mount Wachusett has developed over time a culture of inquisitiveness that is supported by a systematic approach to collecting quantitative and qualitative data on many levels and using that information to plan strategically. All planning is aligned with the Strategic Plan of 2011-2014. The 2012 Self-Study Report and the Team's review of multiple documents and interviews with many people, reveal that the College

understands and is responding to the need to learn about its effectiveness and to adjust to evidence. The College has identified and is working to further strengthen the areas where more planning processes are needed. Finally, the Institutional Research Office assures that relevant information is fully shared with all areas of the College in an impressive routine of making sure everyone knows the same information. MWCC is working toward becoming a model example of how to gather and share data to increase institutional effectiveness.

### *Affirmation of Compliance*

MWCC complies with the Federal Regulations relating to Title IV. The Affirmation of Compliance form is signed by the President. In the Catalog, on the website, and in other publications are policies and information related to transfer and articulation. Public notification regarding the Team's visit was well publicized in many avenues of communication. The Team was clearly anticipated by the several hundred faculty, staff, students, Trustees, and community members with whom it engaged. With the College's many online courses, verification of student identity is of serious concern, with new technologies under review, and with many online courses requiring on-campus assessment. The Discussion of the MWCC credit hour policy can be found in Standard 4 under **Integrity of the Award of Academic Credit**.

### *Summary*

The Evaluation Team is in consensus that Mount Wachusett Community College is meeting its mission, based on its "principles" of teaching and learning excellence, building on students' potential for success, maintaining a supportive learning environment, responding to the community with relevant and quality programs, and instilling in students a civic responsibility. The College has made an extraordinary commitment to develop and maintain programs that are needed in the region and that are desired by the students. While developing and maintaining its core transfer and career programs and fostering student academic excellence and civic engagement, MWCC has also reached out to serve the needs of a changing community. Through aggressive grant pursuit, friend and fund raising, MWCC has been able to respond to new workforce opportunities, to a growing immigrant population, and to high school populations to build aspiration and skills. Many of these programs take place on satellite sites and within local high schools. In a time of economic constraints from public funding, the College has also managed to develop a thoughtful planning and assessment model that permeates all levels of activity. Mount Wachusett, fondly referred to by faculty, students, community members as "the Mount," in many ways exemplifies the best of the entrepreneurial spirit it takes to assure the community college focus of access is truly accomplished.

Following, are the strengths and concerns that the Team identified as the most important.

### **Strengths**

- The mission/vision/goals statements are well articulated, understood, and practiced by key parts of MWCC, central to the culture of the College community, permeating many levels and activities, and particularly manifested in the extraordinary focus on student access, support, and civic engagement. The core values are evident throughout the College, clearly discernible in the transparent, collegial, and respectful community that is Mount Wachusett Community College.
- The planning processes operate on multiple levels and are participatory, systematic, and comprehensive, using quantitative and qualitative assessment to inform decision making; data is widely disseminated throughout the College community.
- The governing board operates independently, is significantly active, informed, and committed to the College, including supporting the Foundation's fund-raising activities.
- Extensive articulation and partnership agreements have been established with area high schools and with baccalaureate granting colleges.
- The full-time faculty are highly committed and dedicated to the students and to the College, as evidenced by their willingness to extend themselves beyond discharging their instructional responsibilities by participating in many activities to support students and to strengthen the College.
- The Student Life programs are comprehensive, diverse, and consistently assessed; strategic enrollment plans and initiatives are data driven; and an impressive array of student support services, such as the Access and Transition programs at local high schools, are offered.
- The library is a strong element in the life of the College, fully integrated into the academic program in its support of the Information Literacy Core. It is well-funded, accessible, and highly regarded by the entire college community.
- MWCC has embraced energy conservation and sustainability efforts, through the installation of a biomass power plant, a photo-voltaic array, two wind turbines, and geothermal heat sources.
- The College is extraordinarily successful in securing grants and funds, and the Foundation provides an impressive number of financial rewards to the College and community through scholarship and capital campaigns. In addition, the College exhibits financial strength in its operating budget by having gained reserves after many years of lean fund balances.
- The website, Catalog, and other print materials are particularly well articulated, attractive, and easily navigated.

### **Concerns**

- The mission, so clearly met by the full-time faculty and staff, needs to be more visible across the institution. Noted in the Self-Study, and confirmed in faculty and staff meetings, the College is challenged to assure that the significance and ramifications of the mission are formally introduced to and inculcated in all parts of the campus, including temporary and adjunct faculty and staff.

- MWCC's commitment to assessment of learning outcomes in all courses needs to be supported, as identified in the Self-Study, by a plan for increasing faculty participation to include part-time.
- The College's commitment to diversity in hiring needs to be supported by a clearly articulated plan.
- Though MWCC's main and satellite campuses are adequately equipped and managed, the main Gardner campus, needs a facelift due to aging infrastructure, exacerbated by the lack of deferred maintenance funds. The Gardner campus also appears to need more space to meet its needs, with the library sharing space with the Learning Center, and the cafeteria serving a dual purpose as formal meeting space.
- Given the above, decreasing State resources are inadequate to support the needs of the College and the community.