

Fifth-Year Interim Report 2007



**Mount Wachusett
Community College**

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Prepared For:

*The Commission on Institutions of Higher Education,
New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc.*

Submitted: January 15, 2007

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STATEMENT ON REPORT PREPARATION

Shortly after the college received notification of its renewal of the ten year accreditation, Dr. Melissa Fama, associate vice president of Academic Affairs, and Paul Laverty, professor of mathematics, were appointed by President Daniel Asquino to coordinate and oversee the preparation of the fifth-year interim report. In February 2006, Dr. Fama and Professor Laverty convened an ad hoc committee to research and write the report. The committee was composed of the following committee chairs:

Standard One	Elaine Smith, Vice President of Data Management and Institutional Assessment
Standard Two	Elaine Smith, Vice President of Data Management and Institutional Assessment
Standard Three	Charles Weitze, Dean of Mathematics, Science, and Technology
Standard Four	Peter Trainor, Vice President of Academic Affairs
Standard Five	Peter Trainor, Vice President of Academic Affairs
Standard Six	Dr. Ann McDonald, Vice President of Student Services/Enrollment Management
Standard Seven	Linda Oldach, Assistant Dean of Library and Information Services
Standard Eight	Edward R. Terceiro, Jr., Executive Vice President
Standard Nine	Jane Gustowski, Vice President of Administrative Services
Standard Ten	Sharyn Rice, Vice President of Advancement and Community Relations
Standard Eleven	Dr. Jacqueline Feldman, Vice President of Lifelong Learning and Workforce Development
Distance Learning	Dr. Vincent Ialenti, Director of Distance Learning

Each committee chair was asked to develop a sub-committee comprised of faculty and staff to assist them with the writing of their assigned standard. To assure participation from faculty, a draft of the document was given to all department chairs and feedback was required. The four drafts of the document were made available on the Academic Affairs website, and several emails were sent to all college employees encouraging them to read the draft and to provide comments and suggestions for improvement. A final draft was developed and presented to the president and his executive staff for final approval.

INSTITUTIONAL OVERVIEW

Since 1963, Mount Wachusett Community College (MWCC) has become an educational destination for north central Massachusetts residents. One of 15 community colleges in Massachusetts, MWCC is the ninth largest with a headcount of about 9,000 students who, each year, take credit and non-credit courses on a full-time or part-time basis in classrooms in Gardner, Leominster, Devens, Fitchburg, or Orange, or online via the college's distance learning program. Many of them are first-generation college students and hold part-time or full-time jobs.

MWCC's service area is a diverse mix of population groups, and its student body mirrors that diversity. Seventeen percent of its students are minorities, predominantly Latinos, Asian Pacific Islanders and non-Latino Blacks, and 68 percent are women. Most students (56 percent) are age 24 or under; 53 percent of students are enrolled part time.

MWCC offers more than 40 certificates and associate degrees that prepare students for jobs in high demand fields or transfer to a four-year college or university, and the college awarded 442 associate degrees and 202 certificates in 2005. Seventy-one percent of students enroll in career (associate in science degree) programs, and sixteen percent enroll in transfer (associate in arts degree) programs.

Faculty are the driving influence in academic quality at the college; and in fall 2006, 74 faculty were employed full time: 54 percent at the professor rank; 21 percent at the associate professor rank; 17 percent at the assistant professor rank; and eight percent at the instructor rank. Fourteen percent hold doctoral degrees; 79 percent hold masters degrees as their highest degree; and seven percent hold baccalaureate degrees as their highest degree. Fifty-eight percent are tenured. The college has a faculty-to-student ratio of 22:1.

MWCC's student services include counseling and advising, academic support, transfer assistance, an Honors Program, and student life activities. The college's Adult Basic Education and English-as-a-Second Language programs, as well as a "Gateway to College" dropout recovery program, are available to individuals who want to earn their GED and/or learn to speak and write in English. Many graduates of these programs enroll in MWCC's college-level programs. MWCC also specializes in workforce training for companies in north central Massachusetts. The college provides customized training and mobile classroom training to meet the needs of its business clients.

As part of the college's "Decade of Civic Engagement" initiative launched by President Asquino, the Center for Democracy and Humanity was formed in the fall of 2005. The center offers many programs and services including: AmeriCorps Scholars, Citizenship Academy, Community Builders, Institute for Nonprofit Development, the Molly Bish Institute for Child Health and Safety, United Way Youth Venture, and the *What's Next?* Speaker's Series. To catalyze civic engagement within the college and the communities served by the college, the center employs four strategies: student engagement, capacity building, resident engagement, and systemic change. The center coordinates programs and activities to ensure optimum efficiency and collaboration in the communities the college serves. The center also provides outreach and promotion to the Division of Academic Affairs' initiatives for infusing service learning into the curricula and academic endeavors.

The center has been recognized as a national model for its unique partnerships with a variety of community and national organizations including the United Way of North Central Massachusetts, the United Way of America, the American Association of Community Colleges, and Ashoka: Innovators for the Public. The college is recognized as a leader in civic engagement and service learning in the Commonwealth. The

Massachusetts Board of Higher Education co-hosted a forum, “Civic Engagement Across the Commonwealth,” at MWCC. “Public service was once a key component of public higher education and can be again, with renewed commitment,” said Chancellor Judith Gill. “What could be more important for public higher education than for our students to really understand the importance of being a civic leader and a true citizen?” To this end, over 250 students provide service to the community through classroom projects each semester and education on civics is incorporated in many general education courses.

RESPONSE TO AREAS OF SPECIAL EMPHASIS FROM 2002 SELF-STUDY

Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes in Career Programs and the Evaluation of Support Services

Assessment remains an evolutionary, ongoing, and incremental process, resulting in reconsideration of policies and procedures that could effectively shape the long-term goals of the institution in relation to student learning and program improvement. Consistent with this statement, the college has added a substantial program review process that requires all liberal arts and career programs to complete a self-study every three years. The addition of an institutional research assessment analyst and formation of a new information system and services department has quadrupled the amount of student data available to faculty. Demographic data on students, as well as statistical data on course completion and program retention, graduation, student placement, and student transfer, is examined by the department chairs and faculty as part of the program review process. The process has been particularly meaningful for the career programs as a means for assessing student success.

Within the program review, faculty must connect program objectives with teaching and assessment techniques. Data from program review leads to course and curricula changes. As a result of a program review conducted in 2003, the business career programs added a capstone course in 2004 to further assess program and general education competencies and will be adding an exit exam as part of the capstone course. As a result of the 2004 program review, the art department added a portfolio requirement to assess students’ learning of program competencies. The career programs in the school of health sciences have increased their assessment of student learning outcomes since the self-study in 2002. Faculty who teach nursing courses use an evaluation tool for both course and clinical experiences for the purposes of assessment and revision. The faculty member is responsible for tabulating and quantifying results of these evaluations in either numeric or percent form, along with providing a written plan of how to improve or rectify any problem expressed in the process. Data for each course are then pulled together, tabulated in an Excel spreadsheet, and presented in chart form at the annual curriculum planning meeting held each June.

The college has completed a far reaching proposal to solidify locations of program assessment and general education assessment as a means to acquire meaningful data for the purpose of advancing student, program, and institutional effectiveness. The new

proposal’s implementation is in process and requires faculty and programs to implement capstone courses, institute sophomore-level exit exams, formalize student tracking mechanisms, and create defined requirements for (electronic) e-portfolios. Outcome assessment measurements for the programs are listed in the grid below:

PROGRAM	CAPSTONE COURSE	EXIT EXAMS (INTERNAL)	CURRICULUM TRACKING	PORTFOLIOS/ E-PORTFOLIOS
Art Professional	X		X	X
Art Transfer	X		X	X
Auto Technology		X	X	
Broadcasting and Telecommunications	X	X	X	
Business Career	X	X	X	X
Business Transfer	X	X	X	X
Clinical Lab Science		X		
Complementary Health Care	X	X		
Computer Graphic Design	X		X	X
Computer Graphic Web Design	X		X	X
Computer Information Systems	X	X	X	
Criminal Justice	X	X	X	
Dental Hygiene	X			
Early Childhood Education Career	X		X	X
Early Childhood Education Transfer			X	X
General Studies	X		X	
Human Services	X	X	X	X
Medical Assisting				X
Natural Resources Technology	X	X	X	X
Nursing	X	X		X
Paralegal	X	X		
Physical Therapist Assistant	X	X	X	

In addition to the above, all faculty sabbaticals now require the development of assessment tools tied to project proposals as a means to evaluate the value of the sabbatical project and its impact on student learning. Some programs have instituted student “focus” group discussions as a means to acquire student opinions of teaching and learning that could have an immediate and positive impact. The college has made strides in assessing learning outcomes in the career programs but still has ground to cover that includes benchmark assessment.

Much progress has been made and much work remains to be completed in the area of assessment and analysis of student services. Nearly 100 percent of student programming is evaluated in a timely fashion revealing students' thoughts and opinions of programs such as orientation, co-curricular programs, and recruitment events. This information is reviewed and programs are altered or maintained in response to the evaluations. More analysis is necessary to evaluate the impact of these programs on the participants. Effectiveness measures will be implemented over the next year that will assess the impact of these programs on students' overall success. Reviewing students' persistence and academic success should reveal any differences in outcomes when compared to non-participants.

In 2005 and 2006, the college administered the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE). The survey asks questions that assess institutional practices and student behaviors that are correlated highly with student learning and student retention. Results have indicated that MWCC students fell below the national mean on questions related to the frequency of use of key student services such as academic advising, career counseling, job placement, and computer labs. During the 2006-2007 academic year, students services will be conducting randomly assigned focus groups to gain more information on why students are not using these services and what can be done to improve participation. Assessment practices must also be expanded to include services such as admissions, financial aid, advising, counseling services, and health services. An online and in-person evaluation instrument is under development to afford students the opportunity to rate the quality of services they receive from these areas and comment on the effect the services had on their academic and personal choices. The CCSSE will continue to be conducted periodically to assess overall satisfaction with student and academic services over time.

Implementation of One-College Concept

Since the 2002 self-study, the college has made great progress in implementing services to students taking courses at satellite campuses and online. Technology and cross-training of staff have aided this process. Examples of this cut across many departments including admissions, financial aid, enrollment services, counseling, and advising. In the past, certain procedures or processes could only be performed in person or at the Gardner campus. Through the college's WebConnect, students may now register online for courses or make changes to their schedules; print their own schedules; review the course schedule to check for availability; review their financial aid status and award; request transcripts; request address changes; review grades; and complete a degree audit to check on their academic progress. Faculty and academic advisers can use WebConnect to enter grades online; access student academic assessment scores; review student academic history; and review other pertinent student information.

Additional online services have continued to improve access to students and prospective students. The college launched an online recruitment product in October 2005 allowing prospective students to inquire about the college's programs and services via the web.

An online admissions application will be launched in 2007 as a complement to the traditional, existing process. While these products further expand access, additional emphasis will also be given to the strengthening of communications with students and the development of a full-fledged relationship management program designed to strengthen ties between the student and college.

Support services to the satellite campuses have expanded since the 2002 self-study. The student life office participates in the Orange and the Devens campuses' fall and spring student orientations by sponsoring "getting acquainted" activities and presenting information on student life at the college. The student life office has a series of welcoming events in the fall and spring semesters at the Orange, Devens, Burbank, and Leominster campuses featuring the distribution of food, information on student services, and welcoming packets that include the college catalog and the student success manual.

Since the 2002 self-study, the college's academic support center has expanded its services to the satellite campuses and via the web. Although there is no academic support center at the satellite campuses, students can make an appointment for tutoring; and a tutor will meet the student at the satellite campus. Students also have access to free, online tutoring through eTutoring.org; professional tutors are available seven days a week via the web. Students can log in from home, school, or anywhere that they have Internet access; eTutoring is a collaborative, online tutoring program sponsored by the Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium and Massachusetts Colleges Online.

Library services are provided at the satellite campuses. Students can receive online reference assistance; access to resources including databases, online tutorials; and receive books and print materials through a delivery service. Student support is available via email, web, and through a toll-free number. At the orientation programs that take place at the satellite campuses, library staff members give students an overview of the available services. Library instruction also takes place in English, psychology, and computer information science courses offered at the satellite campuses. The library staff provides support to faculty teaching at satellite campuses through one-on-one instruction; support in identifying plagiarism; information on copyright rules; delivery of materials, as well as any other requests faculty may have. The library staff catalog, process, and maintain the collections of any satellite campus that allows online public access to the records, including all items from the practical nursing program at the Devens and Orange sites, as well as the dental hygiene program at Burbank Hospital in Fitchburg.

Customized web pages have been created to address the needs of students enrolling in online courses or courses at satellite campus locations. Each of the services offered in person through the advising and counseling center maintains a website where students can access information and services, schedule individual appointments, or have e-conversations with advisers and counselors. Advisers and counselors visit the satellite campuses frequently to assist students with their advising, registration, career counseling, and job placement concerns.

Students with disabilities at the Leominster campus receive services from the director of the campus who holds a degree in counseling. She confers with the college's counselor for students with disabilities on cases and makes arrangements for needed technology for accommodations for students studying at the campus. The college administration realized that more services are needed for students with disabilities on satellite campuses, and in the fall semester of 2006, hired a part-time disabilities counselor to provide services at the satellite campuses. In addition, the college upgraded the counselor for students with disabilities position to coordinator of student disability services so that the person could assure that students at satellite campuses receive the assistance they need.

The significant enrollment growth that the college has experienced has challenged departments that provide services to these students. In the next five years, the college will continue to use technology and increase human resources to assure that all students are receiving the information and support they need to successfully meet their educational goals.

Achieving Our Goals for Diversifying Our Faculty

In the Commission's letter, dated October 18, 2002 item three emphasized that the college continue to "achieve its own goals for diversifying its faculty." This continues to be a major goal of the institution.

Recruiting efforts have been expanded to include more diverse publications and websites, including:

- *The Boston Globe Diversity Magazine*
- *The Worcester Telegram and Gazette Latino Pulse*
- *Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education*
- *Diverse*
- *Black Careers Now*
- *Affirmative Action Register Issue*

Across Massachusetts, recruiting faculty from minority populations remains a challenge for higher education institutions. As a remedy, recruiting and advertising are now being conducted in conjunction with other state and community colleges to broaden the pool of minority candidates. A recruiting strategy was developed to include the following approaches: increased recruitment at job fairs; community outreach efforts; and retention of those underrepresented populations by offering support systems (such as mentoring programs).

When a full-time faculty member is recruited, all applications for the position are thoroughly reviewed by the college's human resources department and members of an appointed search committee. When the pool of applicants does not contain persons of underrepresented or diverse populations, a new advertisement of the position is initiated. It is important to note that our rural location has been a detriment when recruiting faculty from underrepresented or diverse populations.

Aggressive outreach efforts to ensure that persons working and teaching at MWCC represent the diversity of our geographical area have paid off. In 2003, the overall percentage of new hires from underrepresented or diverse populations was 23.8 percent. To date in 2006, the percentage is 30.6 percent. Despite the college's overall percentage of new hires from underrepresented or diverse populations, the college continues to struggle in attracting qualified faculty from underrepresented populations. Three faculty members from underrepresented or diverse backgrounds have been hired since fall 2002 (10 percent of new hires). A major effort will continue to diversify our faculty as more of our faculty retire.

Maintaining Fiscal Stability in the Face of Uncertainty About State Funding and Continuance of Grants

Mount Wachusett Community College, as with all Commonwealth institutions, continues to face a degree of uncertainty about state funding and the continuance of grants. However, the college has been extremely proactive in its attempts to mitigate this problem. For example:

- The college has actually increased grant activity in a variety of areas that will potentially impact future student enrollment and retention, (e.g., Gateway to College, GEAR UP, Student Support Services, Educational Opportunity Center, Talent Search, Latino Coalition, etc.). These grants are directed to in-school youth and help prepare students not only for entrance but also for successful completion of postsecondary programs.
- The college has completed a significant capital campaign that has also provided substantial scholarship assistance (\$1 million) to needy students.
- The college has initiated a variety of cost containment strategies to improve effectiveness and efficiency, i.e. consortium spending, joint purchase agreements, collaborative bids (banking services), etc.
- The college has become a nationally recognized leader in energy conservation, renewable energy, and sustainability projects saving approximately 19 million kWh of electricity and 9 million gallons of water with a net saving approaching \$2 million. As a result, the college has been awarded over \$3 million in funding from the U.S. Department of Energy to continue to enhance existing projects and pursue new and emerging technologies.
- The college has begun to initiate program specific fees to help capture actual costs associated with high cost programs.
- The college has significantly increased its fundraising efforts resulting in a maximized endowment incentive award from the Commonwealth.

These and many other strategies have stabilized and diversified college revenue streams, leaving the institution less susceptible to uncertainty about state funding and the continuance of grants.

NARRATIVE

STANDARD ONE MISSION and PURPOSES

UPDATE

The college initiated a comprehensive, broad-based strategic planning process in April 2004. This strengthened planning process resulted in the development of a more focused vision, mission, strategic goals, objectives, and performance outcome metrics. The new strategic plan, “Reaching New Heights of Excellence, Impact, and Performance 2005-2008,” issued in June 2005, clearly sets the direction, priorities, and expected outcomes for institutional development and advancement from 2005 through 2008. In addition, the college introduced Strategic Planning Online (SPOL), a new, fully integrated planning, budgeting, and institutional assessment system (described in Standard 2) to ensure successful annual implementation of its vision and mission-driven strategic plan.

Faculty and staff across the college were actively involved in defining a vision for the college’s growth and advancement. They thoughtfully reassessed the college mission in terms of relevancy to anticipated environmental changes and new emerging realities for the years ahead. General consensus was reached that the college’s institutional mission statement needed to be strengthened and made more explicit to ensure that long range and annual strategic goals, initiatives, and budget allocations directly and substantively forwarded purpose. As a result, the following vision and mission statements were approved by MWCC’s Board of Trustees in June 2005:

SHARED INSTITUTIONAL VISION

“Mount Wachusett Community College is a thriving vibrant resource for the community we serve. We provide hope and opportunity for all those we touch: enriching lives, developing potential, enabling success, and serving as a primary catalyst for social, cultural, and economic growth and development. All those we serve recognize us as a benchmark for teaching and learning excellence and outstanding service to students and the community.”

INSTITUTIONAL MISSION

“Mount Wachusett Community College exists to meet the education, training, and lifelong learning needs of an educationally, economically, and culturally diverse population living and working in north central Worcester County. As a publicly supported, community focused institution of higher education, the college provides open access to affordable, high quality programs and services that are relevant and responsive to the changing and dynamic needs of the students and residents we serve. We offer a broad and focused array of credit and non-credit pre-baccalaureate learning opportunities that facilitate: transfer to a four-year institution of higher education; acquisition of occupational and workforce knowledge, skill sets, and credentials for entry and lifelong maintenance of skill currency in an ever changing world of work; and the development of

fundamental academic and learning skills essential for underprepared students to successfully transition to college and the work place.

We are a student and community centered institution fully engaged in the life of the community and a vital resource enabling student development and success as well as civic and economic growth and advancement. We are dedicated to enriching the quality of individual and community life, stimulating economic vitality, and helping make north central Worcester County a better place to live and work.”

Mount Wachusett Community College lives its mission by adhering to the following key operating principles: “Learning is the central purpose;” “We believe in the potential for success;” and “Civic engagement links learning to the fabric of the community.”

Mount Wachusett Community College’s mission statement incorporates the key mission mandates defined for Massachusetts community colleges by the State legislature and the college’s governing entity, the Massachusetts’ Board of Higher Education. Mount Wachusett is “the college of the community” and exists to serve our service area communities and students by assuring open access to high quality educational programming, instruction, and services responsive to regional and student needs. Mission consciousness resonates in the planned strategies and actions taken by faculty and staff. More significantly, faculty and staff at MWCC recognize that purpose does not end with access and education delivery; we have an equal responsibility and commitment to enrich our community and assist students to realize their aspirations and experience success. Thus, at Mount Wachusett Community College there is a pronounced institutional emphasis on service learning, civic engagement, and student service and success.

MWCC’s mission and purpose are realized through the following specific strategic goals and priorities established in “Reaching New Heights of Excellence, Impact, and Performance 2005-2008.” In addition, through the new planning, budgeting, and assessment system, annual budget allocations are more directly targeted to forward action strategies that achieve these goals: “Teaching and Learning Excellence;” “Student Access and Success;” “Community Outreach and Services;” “Acquisition and Smart and Effective Application of Resources;” and “Institutional Climate and Culture.”

“Reaching New Heights of Excellence, Impact, and Performance 2005-2008” and the planning, budget, and institutional effectiveness system (SPOL), described in Standard 2, represent a more focused and disciplined approach to ensuring successful fulfillment of mission mandates. Mission, direction, and strategic goals are far more pronounced in day-to-day operations. They are evident in college publications and frequently cited and emphasized in community meetings, staff meetings, and student interactions. As with any new system, there are champions, skeptics, and the small cadre of typical change resisters. Though the strengthened, more fully integrated planning system is young (introduced in fall 2005), great strides have been made in focusing thinking, actions, and budget on mission-driven key priorities.

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

The fifteen month strategic planning process provided an opportunity for faculty and staff across the college to seriously think about institutional mission and purpose in the context of change and new environmental realities. Positioning the college for continued success in a more competitive and challenging world provided the essential backdrop for focusing direction more clearly and establishing key priorities for improving and enhancing institutional relevancy and responsiveness.

As a result, the college community is far more conscious of our mission and purpose and what must be accomplished to assure the college's mission is fulfilled. Enhancing consciousness and then setting in place the processes and systems to more effectively achieve key priorities were positive outcomes. True effectiveness of the new plan and systems, however, is ultimately measured by achievement of desired outcomes and performance measures of success. Given the newness of the plan and system, it is too soon to measure its ultimate effectiveness; but the annual end-of-year report (2005-2006) showed good progress being made and serious attention paid by faculty and staff to delivering results and measuring success. Enhancing awareness and creating a focus is the first critical step in any institutional change and improvement effort. In this regard, the college is off to a solid start.

STANDARD TWO PLANNING and EVALUATION

UPDATE

Recognizing the sound rationale behind the changes and emphases in NEASC Standard Two and the significance of these recommendations to the growth, development, and advancement of any college in the years to come, President Daniel Asquino initiated a reengineering of the college's planning and assessment efforts. In spring 2004, he created the Division of Data Management and Institutional Assessment to oversee and improve information systems and services (ISS), established an office of institutional research, and introduced a more robust and comprehensive system of planning and institutional effectiveness assessment, supported by more functional data collection and analysis systems. A new vice president was hired to oversee this development and evolution, charged with implementing more robust data analytic support systems, increasing access to information for planning and assessment, and developing a strengthened planning and effectiveness measurement system more fully integrated with the college's budgeting process.

The college further committed, in "Reaching New Heights of Excellence, Impact, and Performance 2005-2008," to a transformative culture of evidence where data drives institutional planning and decision-making; and metrics and assessment processes fuel institutional quality improvement, impact, and efficiency and effectiveness. To this end, the college has built and implemented both a transactional and freeze instance data mart infrastructure as a primary source for data relevant to daily operational effectiveness,

decision-making and institutional planning, enrollment management, and marketing. The college also created a series of standardized analytic and trend reports regarding student admissions, enrollment, programmatic review, developmental education, retention, graduates, and others to provide information for planning and metric assessment.

The office of institutional research was established in October 2004 and charged with responsibility for providing the college community with information and analysis vital to effective planning and assessment. “Data Scoops” is a publication that is distributed throughout the semester that presents data (enrollments, retention, student demographics, etc.) and analysis in the context of past trends and future implications. “Staying in Tune” is another publication that is distributed periodically throughout the semester and provides the college community with information on external environmental trend information that is used in strategic planning. Further, the office of institutional research enhanced the college’s enrollment management efforts by introducing more comprehensive weekly enrollment tracking reports during registration cycles—data that allows enrollment managers and marketing staff to more deliberately target markets where intervention and enhanced outreach and recruitment efforts may be warranted.

INSTITUTIONAL LONG AND SHORT RANGE PLANNING

The planning process incorporated extensive assessment, analysis, and discussions among faculty and staff about mission, purpose, and priorities to improve and be more responsive to students and the community. Several cross-functional workgroups were created to facilitate the college-wide planning effort. The following represents the methodical steps taken during the process to produce the final plan.

Process Step 1: Assessment and Improvement Planning for Marketing and Enrollment Management. Strategic planning commenced in concert with a comprehensive assessment of enrollment management processes and practices (facilitated by Ron and Dori Ingersoll of Enrollment Management Consultants, Inc.). Widespread discussions were held regarding institutional strengths and areas for improvement. Cross-functional and action work teams were convened to develop enrollment management improvement strategies related to business practices, processes, and data support systems required for more effective outreach to, and intake and retention of, student markets. Throughout the summer, these teams attended workshops and planning sessions and began the initial process of identifying college-wide improvement actions. In fall 2004, a similar assessment of the college’s marketing efforts was conducted by Sandra Golden and Associates, Inc. A two-day workshop for well over 50 college faculty and staff participants was held to define the essentials of an institutional marketing approach and plan that fully integrates with the institutional strategic plan and its enrollment and student success priorities.

Process Step 2: Technology and Data Support Infrastructure Assessment. During the same time period, extensive assessment of the college’s technology and data support infrastructure and systems was also performed by SunGard Managed Services and other external technical consultants. This was an essential first step in defining technology and

data support strengths and weaknesses—a necessary backdrop for ultimately defining priorities for strategic technology. A strategic technology plan supplement to the College’s strategic plan defines the technology infrastructure and support actions vital to realizing the goals and objectives of the college’s strategic institutional plan.

Process Step 3: Institutional Strategic Planning Retreat. Three comprehensive studies were completed; college-wide discussions were held; and recommendations for improvement and ways to enhance institutional effectiveness were generated by the college’s strategic planning committee and multiple workgroups across the college. A college-wide retreat was then conducted to synthesize all into a vision, refined and refocused mission, and identification of strategic goals and priorities. Representatives from the Executive Council, the strategic planning committee, and enrollment management, marketing, and technology improvement work groups met in December 2004 to construct the framework for a comprehensive institutional strategic plan—a plan that clearly defines a vision for the college, strengthens the mission to be certain it is in sync with the future direction of the college, and identifies strategic priorities, goals, objectives, actions, and outcome metrics. From this retreat evolved an initial draft plan presented to the college community for review and feedback.

Process Step 4: Priority Strategic Action Planning, Definition of Deliverables and Performance Metrics. Five goal specific work teams were convened in January 2005 to develop preliminary key strategic actions for each objective defined for a strategic priority/goal. Actions have clear deliverables, time lines, and responsibility assignments to facilitate measurement and successful implementation. In addition, performance metrics were also defined for each goal in the plan. Strategic plan metrics represent State level performance accountability system indicators and measures (applied to all Massachusetts community colleges) as well as those defined locally as key indicators of effectiveness at the institutional level.

Process Step 5: Final Plan Development, Review with Trustees, and Submission to the Board of Higher Education. Input from members of the college community was reviewed by the Executive Council and, where appropriate, incorporated into the final plan. MWCC’s Board of Trustees received the final draft for discussion at its June 2005 meeting. With trustees’ approval, the college’s strategic plan was submitted to the Massachusetts’ Board of Higher Education (BHE) where board staff reviewed to verify that the college’s mission and goals and priorities were in keeping with those established for Massachusetts community colleges at the state level. The college’s plan was well received by BHE and was one of only a few plans that included effectiveness indicators and metrics.

The strategic plan, 2005 through 2008, charts a course the college will follow as it adapts to change, new challenges, and opportunities in the years ahead. A passionate commitment to delivery of high quality programming and services, responsive and relevant to changing and emerging student and community needs, resounds throughout this plan.

To foster and promote quality, responsiveness, and relevancy, the plan acknowledges that institutional continuous quality improvement and adaptation to change are essential. “Reaching New Heights of Excellence, Impact, and Performance 2005-2008” clearly identifies key actions that must be taken to address evolving environmental influences, facilitate institutional growth and advancement, and ensure that Mount Wachusett Community College continues to be a premier educational and community resource well into the future.

BRINGING THE STRATEGIC PLAN TO LIFE

One of the key strategic objectives of the college calls for implementation of a comprehensive and fully integrated planning, budgeting, and institutional effectiveness assessment system to assure realization of vision, fulfillment of mission, and successful achievement of strategic goals and objectives.

The new model for planning, budgeting, and assessment was initiated in the fall of 2005 to drive annual planning and budgeting for the next fiscal year (FY 2007). The model incorporates four key components: 1) continuous internal and external environmental scanning to identify threats and opportunities; 2) strategic direction and priority review and setting to ensure the college is responsive to changes in the environment; 3) annualized performance assessment and use of results to inform quality improvement planning; and 4) a budget development process integrally linked to strategic and annual operational improvement plans.

The integration of annual initiative planning and budgeting with the long range planning process allows the college to bring its strategic plan to life. Annual planning and budgeting are facilitated through the implementation of a web based online planning and budgeting software (SPOL) created by Indian River Community College in Fort Pierce, Florida. This software allows MWCC to not only build its annual plans and budgets but will be used to update strategic goals and objectives and create multi-year budgets. Mount Wachusett Community College was one of 12 colleges nationally that beta tested this software in 2005-2006 to produce its FY 2007 institutional plan and budget.

FY 2007 planning commenced in November 2006 with the building of the SPOL system to meet the needs of the MWCC planning, budgeting, and performance model. For the first time, annual planning involved all college divisional and departmental heads, thus formally broadening participation in annual planning and budgeting. These planning leaders participated in two full days of training on both the new planning and budget development process and online software application. Using the new system, institutional planning leaders (N=85 participants in the process) identified initiatives and actions to be undertaken in FY 2007 to forward the college’s strategic goals and objectives, achieve desired outcome metrics, and meet the quality standards set by accrediting and regulatory entities. They also defined budget requirements associated with these initiatives, through preparing departmental and divisional operational and enhanced fiscal year budget requests using the new SPOL system.

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Planning leaders are required by the new process to provide a mid-year progress report and end-of-year summative report on annual initiative implementation and documented accomplishments. The end-of-year report for FY 2006 was produced manually with vice presidents providing electronic reports prepared by their staff responsible for implementation. In addition, the vice president of Data Management and Institutional Assessment and the director of institutional research provide an annual institutional accountability report for the key indicators of institutional effectiveness defined in the strategic plan. SPOL will allow this data as well as other outcomes data released throughout the year to be accessible to planning leaders through web links built into the SPOL system. This will give planning leaders the capability to pull quantifiable information into their mid- and end-of-year status reports.

The model for planning, budgeting, and assessment implemented at Mount Wachusett Community College incorporates all elements that should be present in a system designed to ensure that a college stays on course in achieving mission and priorities and has the flexibility to alter the course as environmental changes and realities dictate.

STANDARD THREE ORGANIZATION and GOVERNANCE

STRUCTURE

The governance structure at Mount Wachusett Community College has not changed since the self-study was conducted in 2002. The college has been authorized to grant A.A. and A.S. degrees under the Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A by the Board of Higher Education. The college is governed by an eleven member Board of Trustees, nine of whom are appointed by the governor of the Commonwealth to five-year terms. Their terms are not coterminous, and trustees can be reappointed for an additional five years. One of the trustees is nominated by the college's alumni association and serves as the alumni representative on the board for a five-year term. The other trustee is a student trustee and is appointed by the college student government association. This individual serves for a period of one year or, in some special circumstances, a student will serve for two years. Four board members (three new and one reappointment) have been sworn in since the last self-study. The current board members are private employees and are leaders in their local communities; none have any financial interest in the college.

The president of the college reports to the Board of Trustees. He submits his goals to the board annually and reviews progress bi-annually. The Board of Trustees meets six times a year with the president to approve personnel changes, the budget, and any other major initiatives. The college's Executive Council attends board meetings in the event that the board has questions regarding policy. In addition, the president remains in constant contact with the board's chairperson to keep him informed of any significant issues that may arise between meetings.

The academic affairs committee is responsible for approving program and course development as well as academic policy. The committee is comprised of two faculty members from each division, a member from the Division of Lifelong Learning and Workforce Development, a member from Student Services, an academic division dean, and a member from the library. From the start of the fall 2004 semester through the completion of the fall 2005 semester, the faculty union (Massachusetts Community College Council) was under work-to-rule during contract negotiations. During this time period, the division deans and the vice president of Academic Affairs moved forward any new programs and courses that were proposed. A sub-committee of the academic affairs committee is reviewing the mechanics of course and program approval process and will be making recommendations. Although the current system is functional, advancements in technology may ease the process and provide faculty with better access to information and discussion.

The college operates under a constitution that includes the by-laws of the college. The constitution delineates the divisions of the college and describes its standing committees. It also stipulates how the assembly meeting of the college is to be conducted and who is eligible to participate in the assembly votes. A committee is now reviewing the constitution and will be making recommendations in spring 2007.

COMMUNICATIONS

The college uses several means of communication. Once a week, the college's public relations specialist emails a newsletter to the college community that includes information of general interest as well as descriptions of various upcoming college sponsored events. This individual also issues press releases to the community as needed. In addition, once a month an assembly meeting is convened and attended by all faculty and professional staff as well as some non-unit professionals at the college. At this meeting the president reports on any significant issues that affect those present. The vice president of Academic Affairs makes a similar report regarding any issues centering on academics. Each of the college's committees make a report to the assembly on what they have accomplished in the previous month in addition to information on any upcoming meetings and/or events.

CHANGES IN THE SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OF THE COLLEGE

Since 2002 there have been several changes in the senior executive staff at the college. In response to an early retirement incentive package offered by the State in May 2002, the dean of the Division of Academic Affairs, the dean of the Division of Continuing Education, the dean of the Division of Student Services, the dean of the Division of External Affairs, and the dean of the Division of Planning and Development positions were vacated. All five positions were replaced with internal candidates, and divisions were given some slight name changes. They are as follows: Continuing Education became Lifelong Learning and Workforce Development; Student Services became Student Services and Enrollment Management; External Affairs became Advancement and Community Relations; and Planning and Development became Institutional

Advancement. In December of 2003, the president changed the title of dean to vice president and changed the title of the academic division to school. As a result, the assistant deans in Academic Affairs became deans. In 2003, the vice president of Data Management and Institutional Assessment position was created in response to the increase in the need for data and measurement and to provide leadership in the college's technology department. In the spring of 2006, the vice president of Institutional Advancement retired and the position was not filled. Responsibilities of the area were moved to the Division of Advancement and Community Relations.

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

The change in senior administration was quite positive for the institution since the positions were filled with in-house candidates, and all positions were occupied at the same time. Since all chosen candidates had worked at the institution, they knew its history and culture. The vice presidents work together as a team and have created a culture of collegiality. The addition of the vice president of Data Management and Institutional Assessment has greatly impacted the college's ability to conduct strategic and budget planning as well as provide the college with sorely needed data. As a result, the college has been much more effective in writing grants (the number of grants submitted has increased by 24 percent, and the number of grants awarded has increased by 37 percent between 2002 and today) as well as reporting to the Board of Higher Education. The college is in the early stages of using data for decision-making and will continue to do so for the next five years.

STANDARD FOUR THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM

UPDATE

The college continues to be responsive to student and community needs. The increase in the availability of data has had an impact on program development and elimination. Implementing the program review process has enabled the college to better evaluate programs and supply them with equipment and professional development needs.

GENERAL EDUCATION COMPETENCIES

During the 2002-2003 academic year, the college's outcomes committee reviewed the college's general education competencies and decided that they required updating. The committee deliberated during the academic year and presented new general education competencies to the faculty on May 20, 2003.

The faculty approved the general education competencies at the general assembly meeting in September of 2003. During the 2003-2004 academic year, a committee comprised of two faculty from each academic division was formed to look at the college's core curriculum and align it with the new general education competencies. At a professional development day during spring 2004, the committee presented the faculty

with options for the new core. The faculty selected one of the options, but implementation was stalled due to work-to-rule. Work on the implementation of the core has resumed during the 2006-2007 academic year.

During fall 2004, the outcomes committee determined that the general education competencies needed to be further defined so that departments could identify which of their courses satisfied the competencies and core requirements. During the summer of 2005, the vice president of Academic Affairs and his Academic Council (associate vice president and division deans) worked on defining the competencies and presented them to the faculty during a professional development day in September 2005.

During the fall semester 2005, faculty analyzed their courses to determine the general education competencies that were met in each course and the measurements used. Data on the competencies addressed and measurements used is available for every course offered at the college. When new courses are developed, faculty must include a list of which general education competencies a student will master upon completion of the course.

ASSESSMENT OF GENERAL EDUCATION LEARNING OUTCOMES

Prior to 2003, the college administered the College Placement Test (CPT) at point of entry and at completion of English and mathematics courses. In the fall of 2003, the new associate vice president of Academic Affairs decided to no longer administer the CPT at the completion of English and mathematics courses due to test invalidity. Results from the previous four years indicated that students showed minimal increases since the CPT was not an achievement test and the standard deviation was quite high. In place of the CPT math post-test, the mathematics department has begun to incorporate common questions for each course's final exam. Mathematics faculty analyze students' results on the common questions to determine competency of learning objectives and consistency of teaching.

For six years, the college administered the Academic Profiles to students during their last semester prior to graduation. In 2005, Educational Testing Services (company that developed and managed the test) announced it was discontinuing the Academic Profiles and replacing it with Measuring of Academic Proficiency and Progress (MAPP). The college decided to not use the MAPP until the normative data is available.

PROGRAM REVIEWS

In 2002, the college developed a new comprehensive program review process. Six academic programs are scheduled to be reviewed each academic year. Each program will be reviewed every three years and will provide an update each year between reviews.

The academic program review process provides a thorough environmental scan of the local/regional labor market in order to benchmark and fine tune program goals, and to:

- insure the best match with the educational and employment needs of the region, both now and in the future;
- provide an in-depth review of program goals, curriculum structure, and course requirements in light of industry requirements and standards;
- identify core competencies and the career/technical competencies;
- develop or refine measurable program objectives and a comprehensive curriculum plan;
- examine key institutional supports, such as informational/technology resources, student support services, facilities, and program financing to assure both faculty and students have access to high quality, state-of-the-art resources and services;
- review faculty (full time and adjunct, day and DCE) needs, credentials, and other related staffing requirements;
- analyze student success over the most recent five-year period;
- identify future program goals or strategies to enhance program quality;
- determine program growth potential (i.e., new certificate or degree options); and
- evaluate program advisory boards so that membership represents a balance of perspectives, from business and/or labor, community-based organizations, four-year colleges and universities, K-12 public education, and current students or program graduates.

CLASSROOM SUPPORT

The college continues to provide faculty with technology for the classroom. Since 2002, the college has added 25 multimedia rooms and upgraded the technology in 14 classrooms. The average per year multimedia addition is five, and there is an average of four classroom upgrades made each year. Faculty use PowerPoint, the Internet, and other technology in the multimedia classroom. For the 2006-2007 academic year, the college will provide seven faculty members with tablet personal computers to use in their classrooms.

Through a Board of Higher Education grant, the college was able to purchase a simulated mannequin for the nursing lab. In fall of 2006, the college opened the new laboratory school for the Early Childhood Education program. The MWCC/MOC Garrison Center for Early Childhood Education serves as a laboratory for the training of college students preparing to work with young children. The lab school, the only one of its kind at a community college in Massachusetts, is used as a model program for working with young children and will be observed in several early childhood courses and used as a practicum site.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

The college continued to be responsive to industry and community need for academic programs. Most of the growth in programs has come from the health science area. A Clinical Laboratory Science degree was added in fall 2006. A practical nursing program was added in January 2002 at an off-campus site in the town of Orange. In September of 2005, a practical nursing program was added to our campus at Devens. A degree

program in dental hygiene was added in the fall of 2005 and is currently operating at the Health Alliance Hospital. These programs were placed at off-campus sites because the Gardner Campus did not have the space to accommodate the programs and because the college wanted to provide opportunities to students in the outer borders of our service area.

The number of students accepted into the college's evening Associate Degree in Nursing program increased by 20 in September 2005. In 2003 the college received a grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration to provide area healthcare partners with funding to assist with educating employees in nursing. The emphasis of the funding was aimed at bringing certified nursing assistants into the pipeline of nursing at the level of either licensed practical or registered nursing.

To support the need for employees in certain fields, five new programs were added in the area of business and social sciences. They are Paralegal Studies degree, Direct Support Certificate, Network Technology Certificate, Business Skills Enhancement Certificate, and Entrepreneurship Certificate. New concentrations in Fitness Leadership and Exercise Science and Special Education were added to the Liberal Arts program in fall of 2003; a concentration in History/Political Science and a concentration in Communications were added to the Liberal Arts program in the fall of 2005.

A degree program in biotechnology/biomanufacturing is anticipated for fall 2007. The program involves manipulating living cells to produce products (pharmaceuticals) which support enhanced food production or drugs which may treat certain disease entities. Bristol-Myers Squibb's recently announced biomanufacturing facility at Devens will employ upwards of 600 workers, 300 to 400 of whom will require an associate degree in biotechnology or related science knowledge. Salaries are expected to start at \$35,000 and reach the mid \$50s. With such employment potential available, MWCC will support the education and training of technician-level students by offering associate degree and certificate options. The certificate program (which does not include the general education coursework of the degree program) is intended for an audience with prior college experience and will be offered at the Devens Campus in fall 2008.

The college decided to eliminate the following programs due to poor enrollment: the American Sign Language and Business Software Systems degrees in fall 2002; the CAD Certificate in the spring of 2004; and the Computer Electronic Technology degree, effective spring 2007.

To foster continued program development, a survey that solicited ideas for new programs was developed and sent out to the entire college community during the spring 2006 semester. Results of the survey were shared with the academic division deans. The deans are investigating the ideas presented by the college community. The survey will be administered every year.

DISTANCE LEARNING

A strategic objective in “Reaching New Heights of Excellence, Impact, and Performance 2005-2008” is to “enhance the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning by diversifying instructional approaches as well as packaging, scheduling, and delivering programs, courses, services, in flexible and creative ways that address the diversity of student needs and learning style and engage students more fully and actively in the learning process.” The college offers weekend, day, evening, seven-week cycles, and online courses. The Leominster campus schedule is predominately comprised of courses offered in seven-week cycles. There has been tremendous growth in the number of courses offered online and, subsequently, a large growth in the number of students enrolled. In the first academic year after the site visit in spring 2002, there were 678 students enrolled in online courses during the 2003 academic year. During the 2006 academic year, there were 255 sections of 75 MWCC developed online courses with 1,423 students enrolled.

Online courses are offered with approval of the appropriate academic department and divisional dean and are included on the master schedule of courses. During the 2005-2006 academic year, five fully online, degree programs were offered: business administration career, computer information systems, general studies, liberal studies, and paralegal studies. Additionally, two programs make 90 percent of their courses available online; they are business administration transfer and human services.

To support distance learning and the use of technology in the classroom, two key positions have been instituted. The director of distance learning reports to the vice president of Academic Affairs and serves on the Academic Council and the Executive Council. He serves as a liaison to enrollment services regarding student support services and works with faculty to develop new courses and distance learning programs. Additionally, the director of distance learning supervises the publication of marketing and promotional materials for distance learning. A director of instructional design has been hired and will begin work in January of 2007. This person will provide assistance with the implementation of technology for faculty teaching online as well as faculty teaching at one of the campuses.

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

The program review process has provided academic administration with information needed to improve academic programs and provide students with the education that they need to successfully transfer or find employment. The program review process is steeped in effectiveness measurement and is the vehicle used to assess program vitality.

Before a new course is approved, faculty must indicate the general education and program competencies students will master through taking the course as well as how learning will be assessed. The evaluation of courses for content related to the general education competencies has insured that programs provide students with a requisite amount of teaching of general education.

***STANDARD FIVE
FACULTY***

UPDATE

The quality of the faculty at Mount Wachusett Community College continues to be one of the college's strengths. Presently, the college employs 74 full-time faculty, which is an increase of three since our self-study in 2001-2002. Twenty-three faculty have retired since 2002; 30 have been hired; three have left the institution; and one moved to administration. Maintaining full-time positions continues to be a high priority of the president despite budget reductions. In fact, the college has the highest ratio of full-time to part-time faculty in the Massachusetts community college system.

In fall 2004, due to an influx of 11 new faculty, the college instituted a semester long orientation program. This program provided faculty with information on teaching and advising at the college as well as on various college offices and policies and procedures. The program received excellent evaluations, and most participants are still employed at the college. A modified version of the program was offered during the fall 2006 semester when five new faculty members were hired.

A faculty orientation program is implemented for adjunct faculty at the beginning of each academic year. A faculty handbook for adjuncts has been developed and is online so that all faculty have instant access to academic policies and procedures as well as to overall college policy. The handbook is consistently monitored and has been revised twice since the last self-study.

During the 2005-2006 academic year, a state audit team visited the college to analyze faculty workloads. For the past 10 years, the institution has conducted an internal faculty analysis as a mechanism to monitor faculty workload. The college presented this documentation to the audit team which indicated faculty were effectively completing their assigned responsibilities according to the collective bargaining agreement that exists between the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education and the Massachusetts Community College Council. A final report of the audit is expected during the fall 2006 academic term. Each faculty member continues to be evaluated according to the stipulations of the contract in the areas of classroom instruction, advisement, and college/community service.

From June 30, 2002 to December of 2004, the faculty worked without a contract. Negotiations finally began in December 2004 and concluded with a negotiated contract on June 10, 2005, whose term commenced on July 1, 2003 and expired on June 30, 2006. The contract was ratified by the faculty and professional staff in September 2005. During that period the faculty worked without a contract and continued to perform their classroom responsibilities, advising, and maintained office hours. Statewide, however, the faculty voted work-to-rule; and, therefore, the majority performed no extra duties including committee work. The department chairs and the academic deans continued to develop new courses and make curriculum changes during this period. Thus, the learning

experience for students was not compromised. During the summer of 2006, a new three-year contract was negotiated between the Board of Higher Education and the Massachusetts Community College Council. The contract will run from July 2006 until June 2009. This contract has been ratified by members of the Massachusetts Community College Council and has been referred to the governor of Massachusetts for signature.

The collective bargaining agreement between the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education for the Massachusetts Community Colleges and the Massachusetts Community College Council for the Division of Lifelong Learning and Workforce Development was originally in effect for the academic years 2000-2001, 2001-2002, and 2002-2003. A Memorandum of Agreement extended the agreement through May 31, 2005. The agreement, with 10 negotiated amendments, was again extended; and its duration is presently January 1, 2005 through May 31, 2008.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Since the 2002 self-study, four faculty members have been awarded sabbatical leaves. A computer electronics faculty member took leave in the fall of 2002 to enroll in a 12-week A+ certification program that trained him in computer operating hardware and provided him the expertise to teach two core courses in the revised Electronics Technology degree program. A mathematics professor took sabbatical in spring 2005 to compare, develop, and enhance the delivery of fundamentals of mathematics and intermediate algebra over the web for both hybrid and distance learning classes. Two sabbatical leaves were granted during the fall 2006 semester. An English professor was granted a sabbatical in order to fulfill the strategic initiatives on developmental education in the college's 2005-2008 strategic plan. A speech professor was granted a sabbatical to establish the Theatre at the Mount high school musical theater awards program. This program will provide a permanent step forward in expanding Theatre at the Mount's educational initiatives.

MWCC provides a wide array of professional development opportunities for faculty and staff. In collaboration with the human resources office, over 40 workshops have been offered each year since 2002 with an average of 30 attendees. Over the past five years, the Division of Academic Affairs has provided institutes during the month of May. Recent topics of the institutes included active learning strategies, incorporating service learning into the curriculum, and building connections to the community. Since the 2002-2003 academic year, there have been two professional development days, eight hours each in length, comprised of faculty presentations on best practices in the classroom. In 2004, the college started the *What's Next?* speaker series. Five nationally known speakers visit the college each year to make a presentation that is opened to the community. The college has developed a website to display professional development opportunities and online resources for faculty.

Professional development of faculty and professional staff continues to be a high priority for the college. Over \$50,000 has been provided each year to support faculty travel to regional and national workshops/conferences.

TEACHING AND ADVISING

As a result of participation in professional development, a number of innovations in instructional methods have been introduced by faculty. Forty percent of our day faculty use the Blackboard learning system as a supplement to their courses. Each semester, over 22 faculty members incorporate service learning into their curriculum. On an average, 250 students provide service to community non-profit agencies each year and apply course material to the experience. Faculty have developed and offered learning communities that integrate material from two courses. Three of these team taught learning communities were offered in the fall 2006 semester with plans for more to be offered in subsequent semesters.

A number of efforts have been made since the 2002 self-study to deal with the important issue of student retention. Several new initiatives are being implemented to address this concern. Significant work has been done to improve academic advising. In the fall semester 2005, nine faculty participated in a pilot advising project. These faculty members advised students who were enrolled in one of their classes. The goal of the project was for the student and faculty member to establish an engaging relationship, thereby helping the student to feel connected to the college. Faculty evaluation of the project was positive. The pilot was expanded in fall 2006. Advisers were assigned advisees in the career programs as in the past, using the student's major as the key factor. For students in the liberal arts and general studies programs, advisees were assigned to an adviser who was also one of their classroom instructors. The goal was to assist students and faculty to develop a more personal connection, which has been identified as a positive factor in retention studies.

The college's academic student success committee has continued to spend considerable time on academic advising. During our Professional Development Day in January 2006, a number of recommendations were made by faculty to address student retention. The academic student success committee has taken the recommendations of the faculty and reduced them to three manageable groups: 1) pre-enrollment, 2) advising, 3) academic enhancement. Each of the groups will consist of committee members, additional faculty, and academic deans. The goal of each sub area will be to produce a plan of action by the end of fall semester 2006 that will begin to be implemented in the spring 2007 semester.

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

To assure that academic standards are uniform across campus sites, the Academic Council reviewed the syllabi of courses offered at the Leominster campus. The review revealed that many of the syllabi did not comply with the standards set in the MCCC contract. As a result of this finding, the dean of humanities and fine arts has recently assumed the role of liaison to the Lifelong Learning Division that handles evening and online courses. The dean will be responsible for orienting adjunct faculty, evaluating syllabi of adjuncts, recommending course schedules, and assisting the vice president of Lifelong Learning in evaluating classroom instruction of adjunct faculty. This will

reinforce the college's "one-college" concept and continue to promote academic integrity of all courses offered by the college.

***STANDARD SIX
STUDENTS***

UPDATE

The last five years have witnessed significant change and growth in the Division of Student Services and Enrollment Management. These changes reflect students' needs, goals, academic abilities, financial situations, and varied backgrounds. This growth and expansion have created a network of services that begins during a prospective student's enrollment in a local middle or high school and culminates with graduation from the college. Furthermore, the changes reflect the college's concerted effort to strengthen the one-college concept that encompasses all of its campus locations.

ADMISSIONS AND ENROLLMENT SERVICES

The significant enrollment growth that the college has experienced has challenged the departments directly responsible for the enrollment of new and continuing students. Since the 2001-2002 academic year, credit enrollments at the college's combined day, evening, and off site operations have increased by 6.1 percent. The number of students enrolled in online courses has increased so that 21 percent of students are currently enrolled in at least one online course, making the online learning community a genuine campus unto itself.

The college has taken a very thoughtful and evaluative approach to planning for enrollment activities. During the period 2003-2005, the college engaged the services of strategic enrollment management consultants (Enrollment Management Center, Inc.) to evaluate current practices and advise on methods of improving and enhancing enrollment. Many activities focused on gathering input from the campus community and seeking suggestions for improvements. This, combined with increased staff training, resulted in the production of a Strategic Enrollment Management Plan that was published in October 2005. This comprehensive plan includes a Multi-Channel Marketing and Communication Plan and Student Financial Preparedness Plan focusing on strengthening communication efforts with students as well as improving their financial management skills related to paying for their college costs.

In 2003-2004, the college community reviewed admissions practices for its selective programs. As an open admission institution, any potential applicant who has received a high school diploma, GED, or otherwise demonstrated their ability to benefit may be admitted to the institution. The selective programs, predominantly in the allied health areas, represent a different challenge to students and the college. A review of the applicant pool and accepted students in these programs revealed that diversity of the student body met or exceeded the diversity of the college and the communities it serves.

The commitment on the part of the college and these departments to ensure that the college's diversity goals are met is demonstrated through this practice.

COLLEGE ACCESS AND PREPARATION PROGRAMS (CAPP)

Programs that service students enrolled in the K-12 system have expanded exponentially in the past five years. These programs, collectively described as the department of College Access and Preparation Programs (CAPP), are predominantly grant funded. Though varied in goals, the overarching mission is the support of students and/or potential dropouts from secondary to postsecondary education. The programs include a GEAR UP program that works with the classes of 2011-2012 at a local high school to successfully graduate and then enroll in postsecondary education; an MCAS program that assists students who have not successfully achieved their high school diploma; the Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) program that aids out-of-school youth and adults in securing educational training and postsecondary education; the Talent Search (TRIO) program and the state McNair programs that focus on middle and high school students' progression from secondary to postsecondary education; a summer program called "Summer Up" that involves at-risk youth and active gang members in focused summer work, recreational programs, and vouchers to attend summer school; and the "Gateway to College" program that enrolls high school students, who have dropped out of school or are at imminent risk of dropping out, in college preparatory and college level courses on campus. These programs work with each of the student services departments to offer programs and services to secondary school students. Most importantly, when any of these students ultimately enroll at the college, they have pre-established knowledge of the services and the personnel who will be their advocates in achieving success.

RETENTION AND GRADUATION

The activities of the student services departments have begun to refocus on student persistence and student success. For the years 2004 (+1.8 percent), 2005 (+17.5 percent), and 2006 (3.3 percent) the number of MWCC's graduates rose consistently, demonstrating an improved degree and certificate completion rate. Initial efforts produced impressive results, although much work remains to be done.

To date, pockets of outstanding retention practices exist at Mount Wachusett Community College. In May 2005, the college opened a new advising and counseling center. This operation centralized support services for students in a physical space where all resources are available and where professional staff may cross-refer students, creating a safety net for them. The staff worked closely with a pilot group of 150 students assigned to the advising and counseling center as their primary academic adviser, supporting, communicating, and encouraging them during their first year of enrollment. At the close of the spring 2006 term, these students had been retained at a 70 percent rate. This demonstrates a significantly higher retention rate than the overall college's fall-to-fall retention rate of 49 percent or the national average of 56.4 percent for community colleges.

Similarly, the Student Support Services program, named Visions, worked with a small group of nontraditional students offering a summer Bridge orientation program and then ongoing services throughout the year. The group was retained at an 80 percent rate after two semesters.

Two other additions that may have contributed to student retention include increased co-curricular programming and improved child care services. In September 2005, the college opened a new student center on campus. The center offers a relaxed environment for students to gather, network, check email, and participate in organized co-curricular programs. For years, students had expressed concern over the absence of an area designed for students to socialize and relax. Response to this addition has been excellent. Co-curricular programming has increased by 75 percent not only in this location but on the main and extended campuses. Students have cited these programs as one reason why they chose Mount Wachusett Community College, and they are part of the network of programs that improves their persistence at the college.

Childcare services have been available on campus for many years, but in September 2006 the college opened a newly constructed child care center on the Gardner campus. This impressive facility, coupled with the availability of stipend monies for students whose children are enrolled at the center, offers a renewed sense of commitment to students with family responsibilities who combine their education with the care of young children.

During the 2006-2007 academic year a student success/retention plan will be developed to complement the college's strategic plan (2004) and strategic enrollment management plan (2005). Current data about student enrollment and success patterns will be analyzed to reveal existing conditions. New strategies and measurements will be established to address areas of concern. All activities will be jointly proposed and supported by student services personnel and academic faculty and administration to insure complete coverage and cooperation.

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

The Enrollment Management Center, Inc. conducted an evaluation of the enrollment management operations of the college during the 2003-2004 academic year prior to their work with the college. This evaluation and their work resulted in many positive changes within the enrollment management area including an increase in the number of web services to students and creation of the advising and counseling center where students can receive academic, career, and personal counseling. The work of Sandra Golden and Associates, Inc. played an important role in the development of the Strategic Enrollment Management Plan's Multi-Channel Marketing and Communication Plan. The results of the CCSSE indicated that students are not using advising and placement services as much as those in comparable institutions. Student focus groups will be held to help determine how these services can be expanded to impact a greater number of students, thereby improving students' opportunities for success.

STANDARD SEVEN
LIBRARY and OTHER INFORMATION RESOURCES

UPDATE

Since the self-study in 2002, the library staff have continued to move forward, enhancing collections and embracing new technologies while working closely with faculty to provide instruction and services both on and off campus. The library is definitely on course to meet the resource and service needs of the 21st century library user.

INFORMATION LITERACY/ASSESSMENT

The goal of programmatic inclusion of information literacy into the curriculum is well on its way to being achieved. An information literacy competency has been adopted college-wide; the Computer Technologies course and English Composition I course incorporate both information and technology literacy components. The coordinator of reference and instruction and other members of the library staff are working with faculty on an ad-hoc committee to develop an action plan to incorporate information literacy across the curriculum and to assess information literacy as a learning outcome. Each academic department will work with the correlating library liaison to delineate ways to incorporate and assess information literacy. A rubric has been developed and will be used upon completion of designated courses to assess competence in information literacy.

Perceptions of the information literacy program will be evaluated during the spring 2007 semester with the administration of LibQual, a joint project with other Massachusetts public higher education libraries. Until recently the library required students to complete workbooks as a follow-up to library instruction, but the library staff have just completed a new class outline that uses an alternative form of assessment (pre- and post-tests using the personal response system). The faculty members who bring their students to the library for instruction are regularly polled and have expressed satisfaction. Any recommendations faculty have made have been incorporated into the instruction program.

Faculty, staff, and students are provided appropriate training and support. The library staff offer workshops and instruction, in groups or one-on-one. Library staff members provide reference and research support in many formats: live reference assistance 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. during the academic year in person, by phone, email or instant message; 24/7 access to databases, resources, online tutorials, via the library website; and links to library resources through faculty Blackboard pages. A staff member monitors access over the weekend; so if there is a technical problem, the appropriate tech staff at the Central and Western Massachusetts Automated Resource Sharing (C/W MARS) consortium is alerted. All distance learning students have access to the same resources as on campus students, including having books delivered to local libraries via consortium wide holds.

INFORMATION COMMONS/INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY

The college continues to support the technology needs of the library. Over the past few years, library open labs and adaptive equipment and software have been updated. The library staff members remain up to date on instructional technology and recommend enhancements such as personal response system technology to make the classroom interactive; a pilot project to stream nursing videos via the Internet so that all currently enrolled nursing students will have access to these videos 24/7; the RFID security system that provides a quick way to inventory the collection and thus saves staff time; wireless technology so students can use laptops in the library; and a Wiki and blog for easy access to staff information.

In line with the library projection from the 2002 report, external fundraising is supporting the transformation of the library into an Information Commons. The library was recently named the Leo and Theresa LaChance Library to honor a local donor. Consultants were hired to redesign the library; the consultants held many focus groups with faculty, students, and community members. Construction began during the fall of 2006 and will be completed during the summer of 2007. The first stage will solve some current lighting and heating problems. The rest of the project will include reconfiguring the library to provide more computers, places for laptop use, quiet and group study spaces, comfortable furniture, etc. The goal is to enhance the library space to make the space aesthetically pleasing and functional.

PLANNING/FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The library staff recently updated the library mission statement, and the Library Strategic Plan will be updated during the fall of 2006. Planning will include feedback from diverse areas of the college and outside partners.

The library budget reflects the state of the college's budget. Overall, library expenditures have increased by 16 percent from FY03 to FY04 and 6 percent from FY05 to FY06. Cooperative statewide purchases and consortia discounts have helped the library to meet its patrons' needs.

COLLECTIONS/RESOURCES/DISTANCE SUPPORT

The entire book collection is in the process of being weeded with the input of faculty and library staff; the process is 20-25 percent complete. With an eye toward a smaller but more useful collection, all titles that have not circulated in the past five years are being evaluated. Purchasing decisions are affected by whether or not titles are available in local consortia. Journals are assessed yearly with faculty input.

New additions are added at the recommendation of faculty, staff, or students; a circulation analysis of book titles is made two years after purchase. The first analysis showed 62 percent of all titles purchased during FY04 had circulated within two years. The analysis will be continued to determine trends and will be compared with results at

similar institutions. System-wide holds and interlibrary loans are easily accessed, extending the collection. As OCLC interlibrary loans have decreased, the loans to local libraries have increased. Library circulation has risen from 10,630 in 2002 to 11,630 in 2006, with average yearly circulations of 11,500. Over the past few years, the library has supplied over 2,000 titles per year as holds to area libraries double what was borrowed.

The library provides databases in all subject areas; and before subscribing to a new database, it is posted at a trial site and faculty feedback is solicited. Consortium memberships provide great cost savings and expand database coverage. The databases are available 24/7 through EZ Proxy using student library barcodes.

STAFFING/STAFF DEVELOPMENT/OUTREACH

Professionally qualified and adequate staff is provided. The number of library staff has increased since 2002; in addition, hours have been added to existing positions. Library positions continually evolve based on the needs of the college and the library. Over the past few years, as staff have left, the library staff have evaluated needs and updated job descriptions. For instance, the circulation supervisor position was recently changed from a professional position to a support position; and the serials and acquisitions position was changed from a support position to a professional position to meet new needs. Coordinators (comprised of senior professional staff members) were introduced in each major work area, including one pending position with a focus on distance education and outreach. The college president has approved the addition of a part-time day reference/instruction position during the academic year to supplement existing staff. All full-time staff members have the opportunity to attend workshops and conferences and may serve as members of committees. Staff have presented at local and regional conferences.

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

The library staff along with Beacon Architectural Associates spent the majority of the 2005-2006 academic year conducting focus groups with faculty and staff to determine their needs. The result will be a new facility that is state of the art but also functional. The assessment of students' attainment of information literacy will provide library staff with information on how they can improve their library instruction and resources. Continued assessment of personnel and work responsibilities will assure that patrons' needs are being met.

STANDARD EIGHT ***PHYSICAL and TECHNOLOGICAL RESOURCES***

UPDATE

Since the self-study in 2002, there have been many substantive changes in the physical and technological facilities to accommodate program enrollment growth and to meet the

needs of the new generation of students who wish to take courses at a satellite campus or online.

FACILITIES AND GROUNDS

Mount Wachusett Community College currently operates three campuses: the main campus in Gardner; the Leominster Campus & Corporate Training Center in Leominster; and the Devens Training Center & Shriver Job Corps in Devens. The college also maintains a presence in a number of locations: Burbank Hospital in Fitchburg; Athol; and credit, non-credit and Adult Basic Education courses in Fitchburg, Ayer, Leominster, and Devens.

A number of facilities projects have been accomplished subsequent to the 2002 self-study. Major construction projects include: conversion of the all-electric campus to a biomass hydronic system including the construction of a 5,000 square foot power plant (\$4.3 million); completion of a 12,000 square foot technology center addition (\$3.27 million); construction of a 5,200 square foot free standing, state-of-the-art childcare complex which houses a childcare facility, observation classroom, offices, and the Molly Bish Institute for Child Health and Safety (\$2.1 million); construction of an anatomy and physiology laboratory and nursing laboratory at the Devens site; and construction of a 5,300 square foot dental hygiene complex which includes six operatories, classroom, laboratory, resource room, offices, etc. (\$750,000).

To address the need for additional program space, the college has increased leased space at the Athol campus (PN program) and the Leominster Campus and Corporate Training Center. In an effort to improve both the functionality and aesthetics of the institution, the college has also undertaken a variety of projects including: painting, re-carpeting, roof repairing, parking lot repairing, and equipping numerous classrooms with full multimedia capability. The college has also redesigned and relocated the bookstore, built a new student lounge, designed and built a nursing simulation laboratory (SIMS), renovated an art studio, and built a new counseling and advising center.

The college continues to make significant investments in its physical resources, and this can best be seen by its capital adaptation and renewable expenditures over the past few years. From FY02 to FY05 the college spent \$2,536,841 on capital improvements. This does not include over \$2 million in Department of Energy grants used for renewable energy projects. Capital adaptation and renewable expenditures have been used to improve the college's infrastructure as well as to redesign, reconfigure, and supplement existing spaces to provide accommodations consistent with changing demands.

SUPERVISION OF PHYSICAL FACILITIES

The college's executive vice president, who is a graduate mechanical engineer, is the college's chief operations officer and in that capacity oversees the facilities management department, the office of public safety and security, and other administrative support services of the college. He also serves as MWCC's chief fiscal officer, assisted in this

role by an associate vice president of Administrative Services. The executive vice president is responsible for the development and submission of all capital requests for construction or major repairs and works closely with the Commonwealth's Division of Capital Asset Management in that regard.

The executive vice president and the director of maintenance and mechanical systems are accountable for ensuring that the college is in full compliance with all state and local building code requirements with respect to health and safety. Together they oversee the work of all subcontractors and serve as liaisons to the state agencies, which administer any capital projects at the college. The director of maintenance and mechanical systems has oversight of all trades workers, groundskeepers, and skilled laborers. A new position, director of facilities administration, has been added to the organization. Among other things, this individual is responsible for the college's inventory control system, the Capital Asset Management Information System (CAMIS), supervision of maintainers, and grant coordination (renewable energy).

Mount Wachusett Community College's public safety and security department is entrusted with maintaining a safe educational environment for students, staff, faculty, and visitors to the college campus. The chief of public safety and security is responsible for campus security, traffic, fire safety, and compliance with all laws of the Commonwealth. The chief supervises eight full-time officers including three sergeants. Each officer has been given police officer authority under Massachusetts General Law Chapter 22C, Section 63. Additional training in the areas of CPR, first aid, crisis intervention, fire and crime prevention, and disaster planning is provided on an ongoing basis. Officers protect the campus 24 hours per day, seven days per week, and can be reached through the emergency telephone system.

SPACE ALLOCATION

The allocation of space at the college is based upon the demand of instructional programs and instructional support services. Every effort is made to allocate space in a manner that maximizes effectiveness and efficiency of operation. The increasing demands of new technology as well as the changing needs of students, faculty, and staff have resulted in significant structural changes at the college.

In April 2006, the college completed a space utilization analysis as part of a comprehensive program administered by the Commonwealth's Division of Capital Asset Management (DCAM). The space utilization analysis applied a "standardized methodology to identify the 'gap' that may exist between current and desirable instructional space allocation and room usage patterns." Whereas a prior study quantified the aggregate square footage needed for classrooms and specialized spaces, the goal of this study was to "examine the relationship between course size and room capacity, including preferred room capacity, as well as to evaluate scheduling patterns." This analysis noted that "between fall 2000 and fall 2005, MWCC experienced a significant unduplicated headcount enrollment increase of 22.8 percent and an even higher increase of 35.1 percent in FTE production for the same period." The analysis clearly documented

that the college has a “demonstrated need for additional square footage and that many of the existing classrooms have capacities that are too small.” The college has also recently participated in a DCAM sponsored regional facilities master plan that examined the need for future expansion including, among other things, student housing and a medical arts complex.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Renewable energy, sustainability, and energy conservation have become the mantra for the college. The college’s work in this area has led to both national and international recognition. The conversion of the college’s all-electric campus to a biomass hydronic system has resulted in the displacement of over 19 million kWh of electricity and over 9 million gallons of water. This conversion has also led to a 24 percent reduction in CO₂ emissions, the largest reduction in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Building on the success of this project, the college has been awarded two additional grants from the U.S. Department of Energy to: (1) install a biomass cogeneration gasifier (fall 2006) and (2) conduct monitoring and field testing that will result in the erection of a wind turbine. The college is also expanding its photovoltaic array and is working with state and private entities to develop a process that will recycle carbon from combustion exhaust using advanced algae biotechnology.

CHANGES IN TECHNOLOGY

In 2001, the college engaged Collegis, Inc. to oversee the management and improvement of its technical support services and technology infrastructure. A Strategic Technology Plan (2000-2005) was developed and implemented. Unfortunately, implementation of the plan was only partially successful due to a significant decrease in state funding.

In the spring of 2004, President Asquino created a Division of Data Management and Institutional Assessment and hired a new vice president charged with responsibility for designing, reengineering, and institutionalizing a new model for information technology, institutional research, and institutional effectiveness assessment/performance metrics. The intent was to create a progressive, “best in class” model more effectively integrating information systems and services and technology application/utilization throughout the college and aligning technology with institutional strategic goals and objectives. To reinforce the changing and more comprehensive role of IT within today’s higher education organization, the office of information technology was renamed the department of information systems and services (ISS) with an emphasis placed on technology and information systems as pivotal enabling tools.

Strategic technology planning commenced in April 2004 in concert with implementation of the institutional three-year strategic planning process. Multiple assessments of existing technology infrastructure and support systems were conducted during 2004: network adequacy and capacity, Banner functionality and utilization, teaching and learning systems/applications and effectiveness, computer currency and utilization, and adequacy of IT staffing and skill sets to support technology advancement. Throughout

this college-wide assessment and planning effort, the college's technological needs and support services were analyzed and technology improvement defined as integral and essential to improving teaching and learning, providing more effective, results oriented services for students, enhancing students' access and success, improving the efficiency of college operations and using data more effectively to plan and fully assess institutional impact and effectiveness. Given the complexity and expense associated with effective application/utilization of technology and information systems and services, a new Strategic Technology Plan emerged as a critical and vital supplement to the college's strategic plan. The technology plan clearly defines a vision for technology advancement and identifies the technological and information systems/services improvements to be made during the next three years (2005 through 2008) to support the college's strategic plan.

The college has made significant progress in transitioning to a new model of information technology in the past two and a half years implementing many significant improvements. A major accomplishment was the successful disengagement from the SunGard Collegis contract without penalty in summer 2006 to afford the college an opportunity to apply its limited budget resources to building a stronger technology infrastructure and its own IT self-sufficiency. Improvements were made in the areas of ISS management and operation; network and telecommunications infrastructure; Banner infrastructure and functionality data quality, access, and reporting; and teaching and learning system. Some key improvements in these areas are as follows:

- Fully revamped the help desk operation to make it more efficient and effective.
- Introduced Cisco VoIP technology as part of the full network upgrade in summer 2006 with the intent of full conversion in FY 2008 to save the college telecommunications costs.
- Upgraded Banner hardware infrastructure and implemented a Banner upgrade policy and action plan and successfully upgraded to versions 6.0 and 7.0. Rebuilt recruitment, admissions, components of registration, Web CAPP (degree audit system) to assure easier access to vital student information.
- Developed and fully automated many data requests based on frozen data. Activated the Banner National Student Clearinghouse enrollment data submission process.
- Contracted with Blackboard, Inc. to upgrade the college's teaching and learning system from the Basic to the more robust Enterprise Edition and, in addition, to host the Blackboard environment and ensure 24/7 technical support, management/maintenance, and hardware/software currency.
- Contracted Presidium, Inc. to provide faculty and staff with 24/7 remote Blackboard help desk functional support.

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Physical plant utilization and management at Mount Wachusett Community College requires careful planning and allocation of resources. The major focus of this effort includes: preventative maintenance and equipment replacement, space utilization,

environmental compliance, and energy conservation. The determination of space requirements involves an assessment of specialized space including requirements for computer and language labs, science labs, allied health labs, and multimedia applications. Actions are based on a coordinated set of decisions on redeploying facility assets to meet the strategic goals of the college. The product of this comprehensive planning process determines the priorities of the facilities management department.

As a result of this comprehensive planning process, the college is currently: completely redesigning its library; exploring the feasibility of transferring a parcel of college property to a local hospital for the construction of a medical arts complex that will have 25,000 square feet of space dedicated to the college's Allied Health program; completing a feasibility study and cost benefit analysis of constructing student housing; and working with a variety of federal, state, and local agencies to build a state-of-the-art rehabilitation facility for veterans on college property.

Increasing enrollments, the aggressive pursuit of grants, new demands for workforce development activities, the introduction of new programs, and the changes in the definition of the "typical" student have made the allocation of classroom and office space a never-ending challenge. The facilities management department staff continue to adapt many instructional areas to meet these changing needs.

Assessments clearly revealed the college's critical need for broad technology and infrastructure improvements and the acquisition of adequate and essential technical skill sets and experienced technology management. The creation of the Division of Data Management and Institutional Assessment and the hiring of the vice president brought leadership and structure needed to provide the technological needs of the college community. The path of change was not an easy one; however, the college leadership stayed the course. The college is now well positioned to move forward and complete the tasks it has set out to accomplish in the Strategic Technology Plan.

STANDARD NINE ***FINANCIAL RESOURCES***

UPDATE

The college has continued to strive toward fiscal stability. Although state funding has not grown as originally expected, MWCC continues to support key academic priorities through various sources. Reliance on tuition and fees as well as grants and contractual obligations combine to support overall operations. The college has managed to increase these revenue streams as our operating expenses increase. As these increases have occurred, the percentage of support from various sources has remained at a fairly constant level while the use of funding has remained steady across the IPEDS classifications.

Although the Massachusetts legislature supported the Board of Higher Education's "fair share" funding formula designed to improve student access by lowering student costs and ensuring increased State support, funding of this initiative did not occur at the level

expected. Under this plan MWCC was slated for the largest percentage increase out of all of the community colleges. While state funding was at approximately 40 percent when our self-study in 2002 was written, it did increase to 50 percent in 2002 due to collective bargaining contract funding and then decreased to 45 percent in 2003, and dropped again to 41 percent where it remained from 2004 to 2006. Our fiscal year 2007 is built on a 42 percent revenue support through the state appropriation. Over that five-year period, the dollar amount of the appropriation started at \$13.4 million and only the approved FY07 amount increased to \$14.4 million. This increase has only covered negotiated costs of collective bargaining increases. Any increases due to inflation or necessary program costs were not covered.

In order to maintain adequate financial support to our programs, the college found it necessary to increase fees to students. In fiscal year 2002 the base per credit tuition and fee was \$111 per credit. This amount was increased by \$15 in 2003, \$5 in 2004 and another \$5 in 2006. This represented a 22 percent increase in fees over the four-year period. Specific programs were also examined to determine areas where higher costs could be covered by specific program fees. Any fee increase did not exceed the funding gap left by the under funding of our state appropriation.

Student enrollment is another key factor influencing the college's revenue. As the college increased its fees, credit and headcount enrollment increased. Our student FTE was 2,341 in 2003 academic year and jumped to 2,402 in 2005 academic year and 2,498 in 2006 academic year. Grant funding also continues to increase at the college. In FY 2002 grants and contracts amounted to \$7,060,176. This amount was \$9,800,462 in 2006 resulting in a 39 percent increase over the four-year period. Comparatively speaking, the total for all revenue sources combined amounted to \$30,434,832 in 2002 and \$37,714,664 in 2006. The difference represents approximately a 24 percent increase over the same period.

In 2002, MWCC Foundation, Inc. initiated a capital campaign hoping to raise \$2.5 million to support key initiatives of the college which could not be accomplished with existing funding levels. This campaign achieved complete success meeting its original goal and receiving funds and pledges in excess of \$3.6 million. Donations were made to fund student endowed scholarships, construction of the childcare center, renovations to the library and civic engagement activities. The largest gift of \$1 million created an endowed fund for scholarships and stipends to support childcare for our students.

Expenditures have steadily increased in order to support the college's expansion at the various locations described in Standard 8. While expenditures increased, the percentage split between IPEDS categories, i.e. instruction, academic support, institutional support, etc., remained fairly steady and well within the norms of the amount spent per student FTE of our peer institutions. Total operating expenses for 2002 were \$27,328,721 increasing to \$34,937,062 in 2006 or a 27.8 percent change over that period. The net result of the increased revenue and expenditures forced the college to dip into their reserves. These deficits were strategically planned following a year where the college's reserves increased in FY03 and FY04, took a big dip in FY05 and were close to even in

FY06. The net increase (decrease) in net assets per our audited financial statements was \$202,139 in fiscal year 2003, \$2,179,246 in 2004 due to the addition of the Wetmore Center, decreased by \$878,476 in 2005, and increased by \$51,083 in 2006.

The college has continued improving its physical facilities and technological infrastructure despite the tight fiscal constraints. Through funding obtained through bonding, TELP loans, MWCC Foundation, Inc., and state bond funds (both DCAM and BHE), the major construction projects noted in Standard 8 were completed. Increased revenue from enrollment growth and fee increases funded expansion at the Devens and Leominster locations.

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

The college's budget process has recently changed to incorporate a definitive link to strategic planning and long range goals as described in Standard 2. The college's fiscal policies are continually reviewed and updated. Annual audits are conducted and our financial statements comply with all Governmental Accounting Standards Board requirements. Our independent audit firm has not reported any material weaknesses since the time of the 2002 site visit. In addition, the fiscal year 2005 audit resulted in no reportable conditions. This audit is submitted to our Board of Trustees, the State Comptroller's Office, and BHE.

STANDARD TEN PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

The college's marketing and public relations departments, housed in the Division of Advancement and Community Relations (ACR), present complete, accurate, accessible, clear, and sufficient information for prospective and current students, parents, alumni, community members, the media, and others. Information is available in both print and electronic formats.

Information about MWCC is easily accessible to the public. Phone numbers, emails, and web addresses are printed in all MWCC communications. An information request form is available online. Business reply cards, which allow people to request information via mail, are available in MWCC's view book and workforce development brochure. Financial statements are offered in the president's annual report.

Over the last five years, web services have significantly expanded. The college's website allows students to: request information; register for courses; add/drop courses; open or forward their student email account; review financial aid information; view and print class schedules, grades, and transcripts; review and pay their bill; access library services; find the most up-to-date credit course listings; review the college catalog; and complete a degree evaluation.

During FY05, several upgrades were made to the college website. The website's messaging, look, and feel are consistent with MWCC's branding initiative; usability is

enhanced; and the site is easier to maintain. The new website is accessible to those with disabilities, conforming to World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) recommendations and standards. Also, MWCC decentralized maintenance of the college website; currently 14 staff members throughout the college can update their own content areas.

The college catalog now includes more comprehensive academic information in a consistent fashion. Upgrades to the annual college catalog process include the identification and removal of all courses that have not been taught for more than two years and the addition of information on non-associate degree or certificate programs (ESL, Honors, Phlebotomy, and Emergency Medical Technician). Courses required for associate degrees and certificate programs are now listed sequentially rather than in a semester-by-semester format as they were in the past. Starting in 2003-2004, in addition to program description and curriculum for each program, program campus/format, helpful hints, employment options, earning potential, and transfer options are included in the catalog for each program. On the college website, we have consistently offered PDF versions of the college catalog. However, beginning in 2005-2006, we began to offer both the PDF version of the college catalog in addition to a full HTML version of the college catalog so students can find policy and other information without having to navigate a PDF.

The college's website and other MWCC communications are updated with the publication of the college catalog each March. The system for producing the college catalog is highly collaborative, organized, and centralized. Over 20 editors make their own edits via a shared Microsoft Word document, attend regular meetings, and review the college catalog to ensure accuracy.

The college catalog includes a directory, with titles and credentials, of all full-time and pro-rated benefited employees. Part-time faculty are not listed because of the frequency with which this list changes. MWCC offers 15-week semester courses, 7-½ week cycle courses, a summer intersession, and winter intersession; and adjunct faculty vary with each semester/cycle.

In 2005-2006, a Student Success Manual and Day Planner was created and distributed to students. This manual is a student-friendly document with easy-to-find answers to questions students have on a day-to-day basis. The publication references policies and where they can be found online and in the college catalog.

To better communicate with the college's audiences, MWCC hired Sandra Golden and Associates, Inc. from 2003-2004 to conduct a 400-household attitude and perception survey, focus groups, a two-day marketing workshop for MWCC staff, and a communications audit to analyze the effectiveness of MWCC publications. Per the recommendations of Sandra Golden and Associates, Inc., the marketing department re-branded the college and developed consistent messages, look and feel of MWCC communications. This was done through research, focus groups, producing a communications plan, and then hiring an agency to help us implement our vision. Through this process, a new positioning statement, slogan, and a unified brand for

MWCC emerged. As a result, several new publications were created or revised including a new view book, search piece, career clusters brochures, and student services brochures.

For 2006-2007, MWCC developed its first Multi-Channel Marketing and Communications Plan (in coordination with a Strategic Enrollment Management Plan). The marketing plan identifies innovative marketing strategies that enhance the college's enrollments, revenues, customer service, and visibility in the community.

CIHI Form Standard 10 Public Disclosure

Paragraph	Information	Web Addresses	Print Publications
10.2	How can inquiries be made about the institution? Where can questions be addressed?	www.mwcc.edu/prospective/default.html	View book, college catalog, search piece, course bulletins
10.2	Notice of availability of publications and of audited financial statement or fair summary	www.mwcc.edu/publications/default.html	
10.3	Institutional catalog	http://catalog.mwcc.edu	College catalog
10.3	Obligations and responsibilities of students and the institution	http://catalog.mwcc.edu	College catalog, student success manual
10.3	Information on admission and attendance	www.mwcc.edu/prospective/default.html	View book, search piece
10.5	Institutional mission and objectives	www.mwcc.edu/catalog/generalinfo.html	College catalog, strategic plan 05-08
10.5	Expected educational outcomes	www.mwcc.edu/catalog/policies.html#outcomes	College catalog
10.5	Requirements, procedures, and policies re admissions	www.mwcc.edu/catalog/admissions.html	College catalog
10.5	Requirements, procedures, and policies re transfer credit	www.mwcc.edu/catalog/transfer.html	College catalog
10.5	Student fees, charges and refund policies	www.mwcc.edu/catalog/financialinfo.html http://studentaccounts.mwcc.edu	Payment brochure and student bills, college catalog
10.5	Rules and regulations for student conduct	www.mwcc.edu/catalog/procedures.html	College catalog, references to policies online, in the college catalog, and in the student success manual
10.5	Other information re attending or withdrawing from the institution	www.mwcc.edu/catalog/policies.html www.mwcc.edu/prospective/default.html www.mwcc.edu/current/default.html	College catalog, student success manual
10.5	Academic programs	www.mwcc.edu/programs/default.html	Individual program information sheets, career cluster brochures, business programs, computer technology programs, health sciences, liberal arts, creative arts, general studies, education, human services, and public safety
10.5	Courses currently offered	www.mwcc.edu/info/web.html	Credit schedule, course bulletin
10.5	Other available education opportunities	http://capp.mwcc.edu http://lifelonglearning.mwcc.edu http://edu/studentlife/default.html http://www.mwcc.edu/honors/default.html http://transfer.mwcc.edu	Programs for high school students, business and industry training, workforce training, Honors Program, course bulletin (noncredit GED, etc.), student life,

		http://visions.mwcc.edu	transfer services
10.5	Other academic policies and procedures	http://catalog.mwcc.edu	College catalog
10.5	Requirements for degrees and other forms of academic recognition	http://catalog.mwcc.edu	College catalog, individual program information sheets
10.6	List of current faculty, indicating department or program affiliation, distinguishing between full and part time, showing degrees held and institutions granting them	www.mwcc.edu/catalog/directories.html (includes full-time and pro-rated benefited employees) www.mwcc.edu/info/direcotry.html	College catalog
10.6	Names and positions of administrative officers	www.mwcc.edu/catalog/directories.html	College catalog
10.6	Names and principal affiliations of members of the governing board	www.mwcc.edu/catalog/directories.html	College catalog, President's Report
10.7	Locations and programs available at branch campuses, other instructional locations, and overseas operations at which students can enroll for a degree, along with a description of programs and services available at each location	www.mwcc.edu/info/locations.html	Course bulletin
10.8	Programs, courses, services, and personnel not available in any given academic year		Personal communication to current students enrolled in the program; edited from publications each year so program not offered is not advertised as available
10.9	Size and characteristics of the student body	www.mwcc.edu/info/facts.html	Institutional Fact Book, President's Report, view book, search piece
10.9	Description of the campus setting	www.mwcc.edu/info/about.html	View book, search piece
10.9	Availability of academic and other support services	www.mwcc.edu/prospective/default.html www.mwcc.edu/current/default.html	View book, college catalog, student success manual
10.9	Range of co-curricular and non-academic opportunities available to students	www.mwcc.edu/studentlife/default.html	Student life brochure, view book, college catalog
10.9	Institutional learning and physical resources from which a student can reasonably be expected to benefit	www.mwcc.edu/current/default.html	View book, college catalog, student success manual
10.10	Institutional goals for students' education	www.mwcc.edu/catalog/policies.html	College catalog
10.10	Success of students in achieving institutional goals including rates of		Data Scoops, Institutional Fact Book, President's Report

	retention and graduation and other measure of student success appropriate to institutional mission. Passage rates for licensure exams, as appropriate		
10.11	Total cost of education, including availability of financial aid and typical length of study	www.mwcc.edu/catalog/financialinfo.html	Course bulletin
10.11	Expected amount of student debt upon graduation	Information on cost, financial aid, and payment resources is available at: http://studentaccounts.mwcc.edu	Information on cost, financial aid, and payment resources is available at: http://studentaccounts.mwcc.edu
10.13	Statement about accreditation	www.mwcc.edu/catalog/generalinfo.html	College catalog, President's Report, view book

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

MWCC maintains a regular schedule for updating the college website, course bulletins, credit schedules, and the college catalog. Individual academic program information sheets are college catalog pages printed on two-color stationery, so all sheets are updated with the publication on the college catalog. So other communications do not go out of date quickly, MWCC maintains a policy of only printing course descriptions and curricula in the college catalog, on program information sheets, online, and in the biannual publication of credit schedules. Therefore, other communications, including admissions collateral, student services, and academic brochures, can be used for longer periods of time. MWCC maintains databases of all MWCC communications quantities and regularly updates as supplies run under 1,000 in stock, unless changes are so drastic in a program that the college must update sooner.

**STANDARD ELEVEN
INTEGRITY**

UPDATE

Since the self-study in 2002, the college has worked diligently to make certain that the college's policies and procedures are in line with the college's integrity. Human resources in conjunction with the divisions of the college make known to faculty, students, and staff the importance of creating and following guidelines to assure that everyone is treated fairly.

POLICES AND PROCEDURES FOR FACULTY AND STAFF

The department of human resources is responsible for policies and procedures that apply to faculty and staff. These policies and procedures are updated according to a schedule that is different for each policy; some are required updates from a federal or state agency. The department strives to make certain that each employee is made aware of policies such as the policy on sexual harassment, the drug and alcohol policy, the smoking policy,

etc. The department does this by requiring managers to attend training sessions, faculty and staff professional development workshops, emails to the entire college as well as having employees sign that they received the policies in order to receive their paycheck. All new employees attend a mandatory orientation session where the policies and procedures of the college are reviewed.

The MCCC contract provides faculty and professional staff academic freedom as well as a process for a fair resolution of grievances brought on by faculty and staff. The contract is readily available to employees, and a link to it is on the college's website. The college's MACER committee monitors the administration's adherence to the contract and provides representation to faculty and staff.

The department of human resources distributes guidelines for managing a search committee to each search committee chairperson. These guidelines assist the search committee in their efforts to make certain they do not discriminate against any candidate. Every search committee must have a member of the college's diversity committee. The diversity committee representative is responsible for making certain that the committee adheres to the guidelines. In response to the finding of the self-study in 2002, the college has made great efforts to recruit candidates from diverse backgrounds as described in section 2 of this document.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR STUDENTS

As is the case with the department of human resources, the college's Division of Student Services and Enrollment Management follows a timetable to update policies and procedures that affect students. For most policies the timetable is dependent on the needs of the institution; however, some federal laws require updates for some policies. Due to a rash in incidents of plagiarism on campus, the academic dishonesty policy and procedures for handling incidents were being updated during the fall 2006 semester. The college has a grievance policy for students. The vice president of Student Services and Enrollment Management and the vice president of Lifelong Learning and Workforce Development have law degrees, and their knowledge of due process is present in the development of college policies and their implementation. Faculty have input into the development of the policies that affect students.

COMMUNICATION TO OUR STUDENTS

Relaying information to students and to the college community has been a challenge for the institution. Students are informed of college policies via college catalog, the student handbook, the college website, and an orientation program given at the beginning of the fall and spring semesters. The student success manual and day planner contain the abbreviation of the college policies and the locations where the full policies can be found on the website.

Many faculty include policies related to standards of student behavior in their syllabi. The administration cannot mandate faculty to do this because it is not in the MCCC

contract; however, through professional development and encouragement from the academic division deans, most full-time and adjunct faculty will include this information.

At the fall and spring orientations, packages are distributed that contain the student success manual, the policy on sexual harassment, and a CORI pamphlet. The orientation advisers go through the student success manual and point out certain policies. Students enrolled in programs in the School of Health Sciences must sign that they received a student success manual and a program manual and sign again that they read the policies. Other programs are considering having students do the same thing. During the admission process, open houses for prospective students, the “semester welcomes,” and at every college success workshop, information is disseminated that includes college policies.

COMMUNICATION TO FACULTY AND STAFF

All staff, students, full-time faculty, and adjunct faculty are now assigned college email accounts. Communications that require all-college distribution are sent through the email system. The entire college community receives minutes of the twice-monthly Executive Council meetings, notices of upcoming meetings and events, and updates or changes of policies and other relevant information. The content of the college’s email system is monitored to assure that content is relevant to the business of the college. The college also has SPAM protection to make certain that inappropriate outside email is not distributed.

Approximately ten times a year, the president schedules an all-college meeting that includes an open question/answer period. Faculty and staff wrote “Reaching New Heights of Excellence, Impact, and Performance 2005-2008” and developed the college’s budget through SPOL. During the school year, a student newspaper, “The Mount Observer,” is published every month. A faculty member is the adviser to the student newspaper and assists students with monitoring the appropriateness of the content. An email newsletter, “What’s Up at the Mount,” is sent by the Division of Advancement and Community Relations on a weekly basis to everyone with a college email account. This newsletter includes information about the events that take place at the college.

OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES

In 2004, the college developed a human subject research policy and an institutional research board to implement the policy. The policy provides regulations for conducting research and the dissemination of research results. Adhering to these policies is important when sharing information gathered from those surveys at meetings or conferences or published in printed or electronic format.

The Division of Advancement and Community Relations formed a committee to conduct a review of each of the grants administered by the college. The committee is comprised of faculty and staff. They are responsible for making certain that the grant directors are working within the confines of the grant (including federal and state regulations) and

toward accomplishing the goals of the grant. An action plan for improvement is developed if needed.

The college requires each speaker who presents at the college to sign a contract and submit a resume prior to speaking. Conferences to be held at the college and speakers who come to visit must be approved by the vice president of Administrative Services and the president to assure that they meet the needs of the college and community. Student activities must be approved by the director of student life to make certain that the content is appropriate.

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

The college's Executive Council discusses issues related to integrity of policy and procedure periodically throughout the year. The Board of Trustees is given copies of new policies. Dialogue around policies and procedures takes place, and changes are made if needed.

Many of the federal and state grants require a review of the college's policies and procedures. During the fall semester of 2006, the college went through a civil rights audit by the Department of Education for the Carl D. Perkins program. In preparation for the audit, the college had an opportunity to review all publications and procedures to make certain that they contain the statement of non-discrimination and that materials are in languages of the population of the community. This proved to be a valuable experience as there were areas identified that need to be examined further. The college has formed an action committee to implement recommendation from the Department of Education and to conduct reviews every two years. The committee membership includes the vice president of Student Services and Enrollment Management, the director of marketing, the vice president of Academic Affairs, the vice president of Lifelong Learning and Workforce Development, and faculty.

PLANS

Great progress has been made since the time of the 2002 Self Study in the areas of assessment of student learning outcomes in career programs and the evaluation of support services; the implementation of the "One-College Concept"; the diversification of our faculty; and regarding our fiscal stability. These challenges will continue to be met by the faculty and administration of Mount Wachusett Community College, and the next five years will see continued growth and continuous improvements made in these areas and the eleven standards set by NEASC.

Assessment of Learning Outcomes – In the next five years, the faculty and academic administration will continue the assessment of learning outcomes in career programs. Measurements for the general education requirements will be developed. These measurements will be used to evaluate students' performance in capstone courses, exit exams, and portfolios. A mechanism for communicating the results of the evaluations will be determined as will a systematic approach for making improvements to the general

education courses based on the results of the assessment. The faculty will implement the new core. The content of the program review and the timeframe for completion will be examined, and changes will be made to garner more useful information.

Diversifying the College Faculty – Hiring and retaining faculty from diverse backgrounds will continue to be a challenge for the institution. However, we remain committed to this effort through continued advertisement in publication serving minorities, collaboration with other institutions in recruitment efforts and through a strong mentoring program. Effort will also be made to recruit adjunct faculty from minority populations; work with these faculty to obtain requisite degrees or experience and offer them full- time positions. The institution has had great success in increasing the employment of minority populations which has created a desirable culture. It is this culture combined with recruitment efforts that will lead due a much desired increase in faculty from minority populations.

Facilities – The college will continue to be responsive to the needs of the community and will investigate the option of collaborating with Heywood Hospital to build a medical facility on campus that would provide lab space for students enrolled in health science majors. The college will also explore the option of leasing space to be used for the automotive technology program. A new major in emergency management will also be researched and, if proven worthy, will be offered to students.

Increasing the use of technology classrooms as well as the use of different pedagogy will continue in the next five years. There will be an increase in the number of learning communities, and there will be a redesign of the college’s English-as-a-Second Language program as well as the developmental education program. More classrooms will become multimedia, and the college will continue to purchase new technology that will benefit our faculty and students. Classroom and learning space will be reconfigured to provide flexibility for learning and instructional delivery.

Much work remains to be done in the coordination and delivery of services at the college’s branch campuses and in configuring them to keep pace with rapidly-growing enrollment rates at these sites. The growing pains experienced at the Leominster, Devens, Fitchburg, and Orange Campuses will also affect the student recruitment and retention and technology efforts noted below.

Student Recruitment and Retention – Effort to increase student retention and satisfaction and the improvement of student learning will be a major focus for the next five years. For the Spring semester of 2007, the president provided release time for a division dean to work with two college committees to develop a Student Success Plan. One college committee is comprised of faculty and the other is faculty and staff. This plan will be completed by June of 2007. The plan includes objectives, timelines, budgets, and institutional effectiveness measures. It will have full support from president and Board of Trustees and funds will be available to support the actions in the plan. Implementation of the plan will require a cultural change at the college, as many daily practices will be

changed. The college will become learning and outcome focused, resulting in higher retention, satisfaction, placement and transfer of our students.

Technology – A major activity focus will be on improving communications and the harnessing of technology to improve services to students. These two dominant activities will result in outcomes that improve recruitment and enrollment services and improve persistence rates of matriculated students. These activities will impact all of the college’s campuses, thereby affecting all students and operations. Improved communications with students beginning at point of inquiry and for the duration of enrollment will strengthen the relationship between the students and Mount Wachusett Community College. Communication plans will be developed and implemented for prospective students, applicants, admitted, and enrolled student populations, as well as a parent communication plan for traditional age students. This systematic, coordinated effort will incorporate electronic, print, and in person communications designed to improve the yield of the admitted student base and improve the retention of enrolled students. The strengthened communications will improve the students’ relationships with the college and complement college-wide efforts to enhance the students’ learning experiences.

Expanded use of the college’s integrated data system will also improve student and faculty access to information and services. Students will have the opportunity to access information and services in a 24/7 environment via the college’s website and specially designed electronic learning courses that will deliver college readiness materials to them via the web. Faculty will have expanded access to student information that will allow them greater capacity to assist students through advising and instructional interventions. The end result for both populations will be an improved access to information and services that should improve the learning environment for both.

Institutional Effectiveness – All methods of evaluation of programs and services in the student service areas will be reviewed. Where existing assessment and evaluation practices are in place, they will be analyzed to determine if the information being gathered is appropriate to assist in the continuous improvement of services. Where evaluation methods do not exist, they will be developed and implemented. The processing of the evaluation results will complete the circle of assessment.

In conclusion, the focus for the next few years will be to refine the system and associated processes and assess its effectiveness in producing the desired results: a college community all working in unison to realize a shared vision; to better fulfill the college’s mission, focus more intently on mission-driven strategic priorities and initiatives, to use data to measure success, and to target limited financial resources toward high-yield endeavors that will net the greatest results.

***Report on Existing Academic
Programming Offered
through Distance Education***



Submitted: January 15, 2007

Prepared by: Vincent Ialenti, Director of Distance Learning

Descriptive Information:

a) Name, title, email address of the following individuals:

Person with institutional responsibility for the academic quality of distance education programming:

Peter Trainor, vice president of Academic Affairs
978.630.9134
ptrainor@mwcc.mass.edu

Person to be contacted with questions (if any) about the content of the report:

Vincent Ialenti, director of distance learning
978.630.9356
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b) URL(s), including passwords where necessary, where information about the institution's distance education activities is available and where online services can be accessed by both students (prospective and current) and faculty; include brief descriptors as appropriate:

Mount Wachusett Community College Web site (www.mwcc.edu)

The ***distance learning website*** (<http://www.mwcc.edu/distance/default.html>) offers prospective students information on the nature of distance learning, course listings, and registration procedures.

At the site students will find a list of Frequently Asked Questions (<http://www.mwcc.edu/distance/FAQs.html>) and advice from student and instructor perspectives on what it takes to succeed in online courses. (<http://www.mwcc.edu/distance/faculty.html>; <http://www.mwcc.edu/distance/student.html>)

The ***resources*** section includes both academic and technical resources for current and prospective students. Students can access a demonstration course site that explains the Blackboard learning management system by using the username = "demo" and password = "demo" (http://dl.mass.edu/sub_pages/webct/orientation/index.html). Also posted is a PDF of the college's "Guide to Distance Learning" brochure that is mailed to each student registering in an online course (<http://www.mwcc.edu/PDFs/OnlineLearningGuide.pdf>), in which technical requirements for computer access are explained (<http://www.mwcc.edu/distance/computer.html>).

Contact information for the ***distance learning staff*** is available via e-mail (ill@mwcc.mass.edu; dbrennan@mwcc.mass.edu; vialenti@mwcc.mass.edu).

Contact information for Mount Wachusett Community College *faculty and staff* is available via the campus directory (<http://www.mwcc.edu/info/directory.html>).

MWCC *library services* are available for online students (<http://www.mwcc.edu/library/>), and a link to the library is included in the course content menu of each Blackboard course site. Each semester the library staff updates a description of its services for the inclusion in online course syllabi. The copy explains how students can access from home the varied content of 55 online databases that cover trade, academic, legal, popular, government, and press content (<http://www.mwcc.edu/library/login.html>).

Online reference assistance for students is available via “Ask-A-Librarian” services that use instant messaging and email links. The service is available Monday-Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Online reference assistance is usually provided within twenty-four hours to students (http://www.mwcc.edu/library/ask_librarian.html). In addition, MWCC’s library participates in the MASSAnswers program that offers an online real-time reference service that provides students with answers to questions from reference staff at some of the best libraries across Massachusetts and the nation. MASSAnswers is available to students 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

The college’s *online writing lab* provides online tutoring for students with a two-to three-day turnaround on tutoring services (https://bb.mwcc.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp?tab=courses&url=/bin/common/course.pl?course_id=6031).

MWCC *bookstore services* are available online for students at <http://mwcc1.bkstore.com/bkstore/content>. Students may also purchase books online through the college’s arrangement with MBS books (<http://direct.mbsbooks.com/mwcc.htm>).

- c) Description of technical infrastructure that supports the institution’s distance education activities (include bandwidth, details of connectivity, network maintenance and support, course management software, help desk services, and staffing, security, backups, etc.):

Campus Network: The backbone of the campus network, installed in summer 2006, consists of a DS3 line. Each desktop PC has access to a 10/100 switched network port going back to the distribution closet(s) of that building.

For students who do not have internet connectivity from home or work, there are computing facilities available at campus locations. There are approximately 700 computers available for student use.

Distance Learning Servers: MWCC hosted the Blackboard learning management system (LMS) for the first six years of the LMS’s adoption

beginning in 1999. For the spring 2005 semester and the 2005-06 academic year, the hosting was outsourced to Bridgewater State College. Beginning May 25, 2006, the learning management system is hosted by Blackboard subsidiary ASP.

Blackboard uses a Tier-1 data center in northern Virginia named AboveNet. Blackboard and its Tier-1 data center provider employ comprehensive security systems including visitation access lists, identification badges, and security cameras. Seven days a week, around the clock, Blackboard data center facility security personnel superintend the operations center. A digital surveillance camera monitors all sections of the network center and all installed equipment to help ensure that no unauthorized entry to protected areas occurs. The single point of entry to the location is guarded twenty-four hours a day with access controlled by an access database and video surveillance. Guards monitor all areas within the location area and only those persons authorized by a client's access list are allowed past a central point. Inside the data center, Blackboard's network equipment is guarded inside cages; only Blackboard personnel have keys to enter these cages. The data center is also protected by four levels of redundant power systems and first-rate fire detection and suppression systems. The facility is fully air-conditioned for optimal data center operations.

Application Security

From the end-user to the application server, security is accomplished by purchasing and configuring an SSL certificate on the web server (128-bit recommended). The web server is the same as the application server. Once the user logs in and is interacting with the system, all sensitive information is stored in Java beans. These beans are serialized and saved in the database as serialized objects that would not be re-constructible without the proper version of the bean class itself. In summary, data is stored in Java beans and handles for those beans are stored in the database.

Network security

For network security, all remote administration is done via secure encrypted sessions (including SSH2 protocol). All ports on hosted servers unnecessary for the Blackboard product or for remote administration are closed. All connection attempts are logged at the server. All hosted clients have randomly generated passwords for administration accounts; no two servers have the same password.

Blackboard also manages a firewall to further ensure secure delivery of the Blackboard applications. With the Blackboard-managed firewall service, clients work with their existing security policy to specify and limit who may access their Blackboard installation. For example, it is possible to restrict the application so that it is only accessed from a client's campus network during the day, and accessed from other network sources during the evening.

In addition, Blackboard runs an Intrusion Detection System (IDS) 24 hours a day, seven days a week on the Blackboard ASP infrastructure to prevent any intruder or hacker from gaining access to the Blackboard ASP network.

Server security

Blackboard proactively manages all of its servers, including updates, upgrades, and proactive health checks and troubleshooting. Blackboard ASP maintains a software monitoring system to provide real-time information about the Application Service Provider (ASP) environment to the Blackboard Network Operations Center (NOC). This ensures that Blackboard system administrators are made aware of system failures as soon as they arise.

Security, performance, and availability monitoring are performed by Blackboard ASP. The following are some examples:

- Connectivity Ping: Check performed periodically
- CPU Monitors: CPU utilization
- Disk Monitors: Disk utilization
- HTTP: HTTP request for the hosted server
- H-Check: Monitors web page content
- Memory Checks: System memory utilization
- MSGS Checks: System log files for instances of Warning, Fatal, and Notice
- Process Checks: Critical processes to ensure they are running
- Ports: Monitors for the use of unnecessary system ports

To protect Blackboard's network, Blackboard runs a firewall, an Intrusion Detection System, and anti-virus software. For clients, Blackboard also runs McAfee virus protection on an as-needed basis. Per a client request, Blackboard will perform a virus check on all course documents, and will send a report of any infected and repaired files. Currently Blackboard runs the McAfee software on all files stored on our network file storage hardware. Due to the enormous processing power that is required, Blackboard does not currently run instantaneous virus scans on all uploaded content.

Disaster recovery and business continuity plans

With regard to data/content recovery, Blackboard implements three levels of backups. First, Blackboard takes advantage of a Snapshot utility that stores read-only versions of a file system and provides the ability to recover lost or deleted files, without assistance or recovery from tape. Snapshots are performed daily. Blackboard also performs daily backups of all databases. Both the file system snapshots and the database backups for the last two days are stored on a high-availability, central file storage system.

The second layer of backups utilizes a separate set of high-availability filers. This second set of filers stores up to 30 days of file system backups and database

backups. Storing all such data on filers affords Blackboard easy access to data accidentally deleted by users.

The third layer of backups uses a tape system. Each week, file system and database backups are transferred to tape and rotated offsite for disaster recovery purposes. Since 30 days of backups (Blackboard's standard data retention window) are stored in the first and second layers of backup architecture, the tapes should never be required unless a true disaster occurs. All relevant data on the Blackboard network is backed up. This includes application files, databases and operating system environments, where needed (<http://www.blackboard.com>).

Course Management Software: MWCC's course management software migrated from a basic edition to Blackboard's Enterprise Edition 7.1 in September 2006. The current license supports an unlimited number of users and course designers.

Blackboard was selected because of its ease of use for faculty and students, and the wide-range of robust features that it provides. The learning management system provides faculty with customizable course sites with: integrated email and communications; auto-corrected advanced assessment tools; integrated and adaptive content release; email, synchronous chat and whiteboard for graphical class interaction conferencing; and asynchronous discussion board communication tools.

Blackboard supports the importing of video, audio, images, Microsoft PowerPoint presentations, Adobe PDF documents and HTML. Installation of publisher provided material in Blackboard courses allow faculty to take advantage of the sophisticated learning tools designed by textbook instructional design teams.

The Enterprise version of the LMS allows MWCC to incorporate Blackboard Building Blocks to add student and faculty functionality to Blackboard, such as access to Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and Online Teaching (MERLOT) online resources. Blackboard conforms to such industry compliance and interoperability standards as IMS, SIF, SCORM and NLN.

Technical support for Distance Learning and Blackboard is available in several modalities. MWCC's institutional helpdesk is available for students and faculty by phone or email. The services of the director of distance learning, Lifelong Learning Division, and MWCC helpdesk system have been the traditional sources to provide student and faculty online support. In June 2006, MWCC contracted with Presidium Learning of Reston, VA to provide 24/7 multi-channel toll free phone, web self-help, and e-chat customer support. The web support site is available at <http://supportcenteronline.com/ics/support/default.asp?deptID=4061>. MWCC's Presidium Online Support Center's number is 866-818-1242.

- d) A list of any consortial partners or contractual relationships that support the institution's distance education activities and a brief explanation of the nature of each

relationship.

Blackboard

An annual license for course management software is contracted with Blackboard. The annual license includes free upgrades to future Enterprise versions, all software patches and hot-fixes for current supported versions and documentation. Additionally, Blackboard subsidiary APS has been contracted to provide hosting, maintenance, and security for the courses and student data.

SCT Banner serves as the college's student information management system. MWCC hired a Blackboard integration team and programmer to design a process that allows Banner to automatically create a Blackboard course site for each course registration number (CRN) and enroll students registered for each section.

Banner's WebConnect provides students with online registration capability and access to grades, schedules, and transcripts.

Massachusetts Colleges Online

MWCC is an active participant in the Massachusetts Colleges Online consortium consisting of six of the nine state colleges and fifteen community colleges of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in cooperation with the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education. Initiated by MWCC President Asquino, the consortium facilitates the provision of state and community college online courses and programs to students across the Commonwealth through a web site and portal. MCO's primary mission is to increase access to a wide variety of high quality, low- cost college courses and certificate programs for Massachusetts residents at the time and place of their choice.

MCO is governed under a memorandum of understanding endorsed by the Community College Presidents Council and the Council of State College Presidents. The executive director reports to the MCO Steering Committee comprised of the executive directors of the State and Community College Executive Offices, one state and community chief academic, financial, distance education officer, and a chief information officer and a representative of the Board of Higher Education.

The MCO Liaison Team is made up of members from each of the colleges in the MCO consortium who serve as an advisory group to MCO for policies, procedures and programming. Team members are the primary MCO contact representing the interests and concerns of their campus to the MCO community. Liaison Team members are responsible for collaborating with the appropriate offices at their respective colleges to ensure that students enrolling in MCO classes receive quality services. Mount Wachusett Community College's Liaison Team member is the director of distance learning.

Each member college pays an annual membership fee to support MCO's operation, portal, web environment and technological infrastructure. Currently, the fully functional portal site lists 1200+ online courses and 31 online certificate and degree programs.

Since MCO's inception, MWCC has had its courses adopted by other state community colleges and, on a semester-by-semester or as-needed basis, has made available to its students courses from other MCO institutions. Prior to making courses available from other Massachusetts community colleges, the courses and syllabi are approved by the appropriate MWCC academic deans to determine if the courses are equivalent to MWCC offerings.

Central Massachusetts Regional Library System (CMRLS)

MWCC is a member of the Academic and Research Collaborative of the Central Massachusetts Regional Library System. The college pays an annual membership fee to connect to the library network which is a consortium of academic, public, and special libraries working together to facilitate the sharing of resources and services for the benefit of their collective users. The member libraries include Anna Maria College, Assumption College, Atlantic Union College, Becker College, Clark University, Holy Cross, Fitchburg State College, Massachusetts College of Pharmacy, Nichols College, Quinsigamond Community College, Worcester State College, and Worcester Polytechnic Institute. As members of this group, MWCC students, faculty, and staff are granted the privilege of borrowing from libraries within the collaborative.

NARRATIVE

This section provides an overview and analysis of MWCC's current online courses and programs, and its plans for future development. During the 2005-06 academic year, online courses exceeded 2,000 registrations.

Mission and Purposes (1.1 – 1.3)

Mount Wachusett Community College's distance learning program is consistent with the college's mission "...to meet the education, training, and lifelong learning needs of an educationally, economically, and culturally diverse population living and working in North Central Worcester County...The college provides access to affordable, high quality programs and services that are relevant and responsive to the changing and dynamic needs of the students and residents."

MWCC's distance learning efforts began online in 1997 with a consortium with Fitchburg State College named The North East Distance Learning Consortium (NEDLC). The intention of this effort was to provide students with flexibility in their education scheduling and the opportunity to progress from an associate degree to a bachelor degree program. This activity pre-dated course management system software and offered its first courses with Lotus Notes software. In 1999, both institutions adopted the Blackboard LMS, but the NEDLC dissolved in 2000

when MWCC received approval as a Defense Activity for Non-traditional Educational Support (DANTES) College and needed to increase the pace of its course development. The college's commitment to DANTES necessitated the development of courses that would contribute to associate degree programs in criminal justice, human services, and business administration.

This activity and strong administrative support has led to the creation of 75 online courses. Faculty quickly saw that the distance modality was a viable approach to teaching and one that provided scheduling flexibility to current and potential students. Students now have the choice of selecting online courses to supplement their traditional course offerings, or can elect to complete a degree or certificate fully online. The use of the learning management software for online courses has created a faculty realization that the software can enhance teaching and learning in on-campus courses. The institution has responded by building 52 computer/video projection system classrooms on the MWCC campuses, and developing a culture in which 65 percent of faculty request "smart classrooms" for their courses.

Planning and Evaluation (2.1 – 2.5)

Mount Wachusett Community College's vision is to be "...a thriving, vibrant resource for the community we serve.... We are vital, we are committed, and we deliver." This vision requires that the college continually plan, assess, and measure its activities, including distance learning courses... We hold ourselves and others accountable ... for acting professionally and with integrity, for fulfilling commitments, for demonstrating good judgment, and for always seeking the truth and applying facts to continually improve as individuals and as a college."

Planning – MWCC's distance learning heritage had its roots in the college's 1975 production of a gerontology course offered for three credits or a certificate on cable television systems in three communities. The series aired two, two-hour live broadcasts each week for 15 weeks. The 60-hour course featured a live classroom in a TV studio and cable audience interactivity was achieved through phone calls. Over 100 students registered for the grant-funded course, but funds were not available to continue the project. MWCC participated in the WGBH-TV Annenberg Telecourse College Initiative from 1995 until the program was phased out in 2003, due to the expense of air-time and the rise of online courses.

Distance learning is now a specific component of the college's Strategic Plan: "Reaching New Heights of Excellence, Impact, and Performance 2005-2008". The inclusion of the distance learning program in the college planning document ensures that the program is consistent with institutional goals and objectives, and is included in the continuous cycles of planning and evaluation.

As the initiator of Massachusetts Colleges Online in January 2001 and with his service as the community college president representative on the MCO Executive

Committee, President Asquino and MWCC have been major contributors to the statewide distance learning planning initiatives. This involvement has assisted the college in the implementation of mission-supported distance learning planning.

Evaluation – MWCC’s first distance learning courses predated accrediting agency or national quality guidelines and rubrics. Initial guidelines used to model online courses were based on Blackboard “Tip Sheets,” and the twenty-four benchmarks of successful online distance learning programs from The Institute for Higher Education Policy's April 2000 report, "Quality On the Line: Benchmarks for Success in Internet-Based Distance Education." Issues of academic freedom, personal preference, and course subject matter make it challenging to dictate specific guidelines for the inclusion in all online courses. Attempts to outline necessary elements of what should be included in a course have come as close to formalization as possible in Forms DE-1 and DE-4 as agreed upon by the Massachusetts Community College Council and the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education. (See attached.)

These early guidelines were incorporated into the April 2002 “MWCC Distance Learning Course Checklist and Good Practice Recommendations,” and became the basis for the college’s online course proposal form that is used to guide faculty in the creation of online courses. The 2005 publication of online course guidelines, such as “The Sloan Consortium Quality Frame Work and the Five Pillars” and “Quality Matters,” the Maryland Online consortium’s 40-part continuous improvement rubric for assessing and assuring the quality of online courses, have been used as touchstones against which current and in-development online courses should be designed and measured. Both quality measures are featured prominently on the MWCC online learning and Blackboard information website that is designed to support faculty in their course development. <http://bb.mwcc.edu> (username = faculty; password = faculty246*8). It is strongly suggested that the QM rubric be used as a guide as MWCC faculty design new online courses and strive to improve established courses. The QM rubric will be used as a guide to assess course quality.

The MCCC DE-1 Distance Education Course/Instructional Materials Checklist Form specifies areas that contractually must be included in online courses. This has been the traditional and minimal approach to institutional assessment of the courses.

The Massachusetts Community College system’s student evaluation of Distance Learning faculty is governed by a 2001 Massachusetts Community College Council Memorandum of Agreement that is part of the statewide distance learning contract. Pursuant to the contract, online courses are evaluated by students on the third offering of a course and each semester thereafter. With the support of the college’s information systems and services department, MWCC now implements the evaluation form online. The vice president of Lifelong Learning and

Workforce Development evaluates the student assessments and, if necessary, brings any issues to the faculty member's attention.

Organization and Governance (3.6 – 3.7)

Faculty teaching online courses are hired and supervised by the vice president of Lifelong Learning and Workforce Development who works in cooperation with the vice president of Academic Affairs and the four divisional academic deans to ensure academic integrity. The vice president of Lifelong Learning and Workforce Development's staff reviews course materials, student interaction plans, and student evaluations, and also address any concerns students raise about distance learning courses or faculty.

The director of distance learning reports to the vice president for academic affairs and is responsible for supporting course development, program development, student services, faculty recruitment and professional development for distance learning students and faculty. The importance of distance learning to MWCC is manifested by the fact that the director of distance learning serves on the Academic Council with the college's other academic support managers and on the president's Executive Council, the college's principal administrative advisory group. The director of distance learning serves as a liaison to enrollment services regarding online student support services. Additionally, the director of distance learning supervises the publication of marketing and promotional materials for distance learning. Two full-time clerical staff members provide support for distance learning in the Lifelong Learning Division. Information services and systems provides support of the technology infrastructure including maintenance of the college-wide network, Internet connectivity, email system, SCT Banner, and as the technical liaison with the Blackboard host ASP.

Communication regarding distance learning issues with the local chapter of the Massachusetts Community College Council (MCCC) occurs through the Distance Education Management Association for Employee Relations (MACER) Committee. The distance education committee includes three faculty representatives and three management representatives. The distance education committee meets periodically to maintain communication with the union, to address questions pertaining to distance education and to provide recommendations and suggestions about distance learning practices at the college.

Programs and Instruction (4.1 – 4.2, 4.29 – 4.35 and 4.38 – 4.39)

“Mount Wachusett Community College will provide relevant, high-quality programs, courses, and instruction delivered in diversified and innovative ways that are responsive to the learning and scheduling needs of diverse student markets, and also ensure students ‘learn how to learn’ to achieve success in the classroom, the workplace, and in life” (Mount Wachusett Community College Strategic Plan 2005-2008, p. 21).

Online courses

In the fall 1997 semester, MWCC offered its first three online courses. During the fall, spring, summer semesters of the 2005-06 academic year, MWCC offered 255 sections of 75 MWCC-developed online courses.

Online courses are also offered in collaboration with participating Mass Colleges Online institutions. Courses are offered with the approval of the appropriate academic department and divisional dean and are included on the master schedule of courses. Courses offered through Mass Colleges Online have instruction provided by another institution and appropriate credit granted at the home college, thereby eliminating transfer credit for students taking the courses. MWCC serves as both a “home” college and “provider” college for Mass Colleges Online courses.

During the 2005-06 academic year, five fully online degree programs were offered to students:

- Business Administration Career option
- Computer Information Systems
- General Studies
- Liberal Studies
- Paralegal Studies

Additionally, two programs make 90 percent of their courses available online:

- Business Administration Transfer option
- Human Services

Faculty (5.1 – 5.4 and 5.8 – 5.14)

The vice presidents of academic affairs and lifelong learning are charged by the college’s strategic goals and objectives to “develop timely new learning opportunities (programs/courses/training options) to address high demand requirements dictated by regional labor market and community needs through a streamlined, data driven curriculum planning and implementation process,” and to “enhance the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning by diversifying instructional approaches as well as packaging, scheduling, and delivering programs, courses, services, in flexible and creative ways that address the diversity of student needs and learning styles and engage students more fully and actively in the learning process” (Mount Wachusett Community College Strategic Plan, April, 2005, p. 21).

College faculty teaching distance learning courses are compensated on a scale set by the MCCC Memorandum of Agreement.

In cooperation with the media services department and the information systems and services department, the director of distance learning and a part-time instructional design staffer use the college’s faculty development laboratory to

assist and train faculty in the use of Blackboard and instructional technology. In January 2007, a full-time director of instructional design will be hired to assist the director of distance learning with faculty and staff training and support.

The faculty development laboratory is slated to move to larger quarters in the fall '06 semester. The lab will feature three computers for faculty training, scanners, and the necessary software to meet faculty development and training needs.

When the learning management system Blackboard was first introduced, faculty training began with 10-12 member group sessions. Blackboard introduction sessions were scheduled at the beginning of each semester. Follow up workshops were conducted individually or in small groups. For example, departmental training was done to introduce nursing faculty to Blackboard. Since then, the software design has become better and easier for students to use, causing declining attendance at the sessions despite enrollment increases. As a result, the college stopped offering the sessions and replaced them with online tutorials, the 24/7 helpdesk, and print and website instruction. These appear to provide sufficient student training.

Faculty technical training needs change as new software versions are introduced. MWCC's migration from V.5.5 to version 6.1 in January 2005 was done with the offering of 26 workshops in December and January prior to the start of the spring '05 semester. The migration from the Blackboard Basic version to the Enterprise version in May 2006 was done with only four sessions. Faculty stated they did not need the training sessions and adapted easily on their own to the software changes.

The migration to Blackboard Enterprise v7.1 was conducted on August 18, 2006. Ten faculty workshop sessions were offered for faculty who felt additional training was needed. The new version features animated tutorials for students and faculty and, coupled with the 24/7 faculty/student helpdesk, transition issues were minimal. Individual and group Blackboard instruction is offered continually during the year.

Pedagogical instruction in developing online courses is ongoing. Faculty proposing a new online course work one-on-one with the director of distance learning in preparation for submitting the course proposal form. Guidelines and best practices are presented, and access to current courses is given.

As part of an MCO initiative in May 2005, five MWCC faculty participated along with 35 colleagues from other community and state colleges in the state-wide online Web Camp training program that concluded with live sessions at the MCO Sharing Best Practices Conference. MWCC's director of distance learning served as one of the training program's expert facilitators.

Ongoing faculty training takes place on a walk-in or scheduled basis to meet the

needs of online faculty.

Student Services (6.1 – 6.5)

“Mount Wachusett Community College will enhance students’ opportunities for access and assure student success and persistence from the point of inquiry through graduation by implementing a proactive and well integrated system of student relationship management (*i.e. student centered policies, business practices, and responsive support services*)” (Mount Wachusett Community College Strategic Plan, April 2005, p. 30).

It has been reported that 60 percent of online students may also be taking on campus courses. These students have more ready access to the college’s student services. Efforts are ongoing to ensure that students taking only online courses have access to the same services.

Incoming Assessment –The college’s placement testing program endeavors to assess a student’s academic preparedness. Students admitted to the college in degree programs are required to complete placement testing, unless they have previous appropriate college course work. Advisors interpret test results and place students in the appropriate courses to address their learning needs and program requirements. For students geographically distant, the college will make arrangements with another institution to administer placement testing. Online administration of the Accuplacer testing is being investigated by the college.

Advising –Student preparedness for the rigors and demands of online courses is a major concern. The director of distance learning has worked with the enrollment management staff to make sure that they understand the nature of online courses and the dedication and time management skills that are necessary for a student to succeed.

The college distance learning web page took a contrary approach from the traditional “Are You Ready for an Online Course” assessment quiz found on many colleges’ online learning pages. The MWCC site discusses the fact that such quizzes exist and instructs readers how to find thousands of them, but the essence of the quizzes, which are impossible to fail, can be digested to the advice presented on the site:

The bottom line is that no matter what you score on a quiz and how it interprets your readiness, only you can determine if you are prepared to take an online course. You need to think about the following issues seriously.

If you have taken college courses before, you know how much time and effort is involved. Remember, you are not spending the 45 semester hours in a classroom, but you must be willing to make a substantial time commitment. In order to do well in an online course, most instructors and veteran online students will tell you that you must be willing to spend 8 - 12 hours a week

reading, studying, taking exams, and preparing your assignments.

You need the motivation to do the work in a timely fashion. You have to arrange your own schedule around your busy life and activities. It is human nature to procrastinate a bit, but remember you will not have someone physically present urging you to get the work accomplished. It is up to you.

Technology-wise you do not have to be a computer guru to use the course delivery software. MWCC uses Blackboard, which is extremely user-friendly. However, you should feel comfortable using a word processor, Internet browser, cutting and pasting documents, and emailing and sending attachments.

You should have access to a reliable computer with an Internet connection, and a place where you can get work done with the amount of quiet that you need. Since the online learning method is based on technology, you have to be prepared to deal with the frustrations of computer crashes and being logged off. You need to know how to back up your work in order to minimize the inconvenience of the occasional technical curveball that may get thrown your way.

You need good reading comprehension skills and the ability to critically evaluate what you read. <http://www.mwcc.edu/distance/faculty.html>

The director of distance learning and the LLL staff answer student phone and email inquiries about distance learning courses, and their contact information is listed in all of the course web and print materials.

Registration – Students may register for online courses via the college’s standard registration procedures using fax, mail, online, or in person registration. Once a student has successfully registered for a distance learning course, the student is mailed a brochure with instructions detailing how to access the online course. For late registrants the same brochure is also available on the college website.

Students taking courses that MWCC brokered from other MCO institutions are notified by MWCC about the details and contacts pursuant to that arrangement, and that the login information will be sent to them by the providing institutions.

Career Services – Career and counseling services are available to online students via the phone. This is one area that needs to be expanded.

Tutoring – The primary support mechanism for online course tutoring is the instructor and the ancillary materials that are often embedded in online courses and provided by the textbook publishers.

The MWCC Online Writing Lab (OWL) has been available for the past three years. The writing lab allows students who might not be able to come into the Academic Support Center to work with a writing tutor. The tutors read the essay and respond to the student within two to three days, excluding weekends and holidays.

Beginning in fall 2006, MWCC will be participating in an MCO pilot project that will make synchronous and asynchronous online tutoring available 18 hours a day, seven days a week to MWCC students in English, mathematics (developmental through college calculus), statistics, accounting, chemistry, biology, and anatomy and physiology. Eight of the MCO institutions will be contributing to the tutoring pool staffed by 24 colleges and universities under the coordination of the Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium (<http://www.etutoring.org>).

Help Desk – Student and faculty distance learning technical assistance is available through a variety of resources. The college’s help desk is available via phone and email Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. The college’s director of distance learning and Lifelong Learning staff are available during that same timeframe.

Blackboard customer support is now available 24 hours a day, seven days a week through MWCC’s contract with Presidium Learning of Reston, VA. Support is available via synchronous toll-free telephone and e-chat services, and asynchronously through an interactive Web self-help support site (<http://supportcenteronline.com/ics/support/default.asp?deptID=4061>). MWCC Online Support Center’s number is 866-818-1242.

Bookstore – College bookstore services are provided by Barnes and Noble. The main bookstore is located on the Gardner campus. The bookstore provides extended hours prior to the start of the semester for students purchasing textbooks. The MWCC bookstore management has been cooperative in shipping texts to online students. Bookstore services also are available online for students at <http://mwcc1.bkstore.com/bkstore/content>. Students may also purchase books online through the college’s arrangement with MBS books (<http://direct.mbsbooks.com/mwcc.htm>).

Complaints – “*The Mount Wachusett Community College Catalog 2006-2007*” defines the step-by-step conflict resolution process for student issues and suggests that “before invoking the student grievance procedure, a reasonable effort shall be made by those involved in a dispute to resolve it amicably. A dispute is most effectively handled and resolved by those closest to the problem, having the best understanding of the issues, and having the ability to formulate a mutually acceptable solution.... Throughout all phases of the student grievance procedure, all reasonable efforts shall be made to maintain confidentiality in accordance with applicable law.” The above informal and formal processes, and other student

disciplinary policy and procedures are described in the catalog and apply to online students as well as to distance learning courses (Mount Wachusett Community College Catalog 2006-2007, pgs. 227-234).

In addition, MWCC's catalog and website outline the institution's information technology acceptable use policies, which apply to online as well as on-campus students. (Mount Wachusett Community College Catalog 2006-2007, pgs. 221-226)

Library and Information Resources (7.1 – 7.6)

The MWCC Library supports the teaching and learning activities of the college, and the lifelong learning activities of the extended college community, by providing quality information resources and services in a supportive learning environment. The Leo and Theresa LaChance Library is housed at the Gardner Campus. The library contains over 50,000 volumes and subscribes to 156 print magazines and 12 newspaper titles. Distance learning students have access to the college's print, video, and audio collections through mail or delivery of materials to a Central Massachusetts library closer to the student's home.

Remote access to the more than 60 online databases is available to all students. In addition, MWCC's membership in the Central/Western Massachusetts Automated Resource Sharing consortium (C/WMARS) gives students online access to the catalog holdings of over 100 area libraries. C/WMARS, combined with the Central Massachusetts Regional Library System, provides daily deliveries of interlibrary loan items to member libraries closer to a student's home.

Physical Resources (8.1)

The Division of Lifelong Learning, which houses the distance learning office, is located in Rooms 162 and 163 on the Gardner Campus. The faculty development laboratory is currently located in Room 386, and is scheduled to move to a larger area (Room 238) in fall 2006. The lab space offers training, project support, and a fully equipped multimedia development lab for faculty and staff use.

The MWCC helpdesk is physically located on the Gardner Campus in the Information Support and Services Center. The helpdesk is staffed 40 hours per week. Students taking online courses that experience problems with home computers have the option of using one of the college's multiple computer labs located at the Gardner, Leominster, Orange, and Devens campuses.

Several online courses require that students take midterm and final exams in a proctored setting. The Assessment Center in Room 128C serves that purpose. Arrangements are made on an individual basis for students outside of the service area to take the proctored exams at local colleges, libraries, etc.

The Presidium 24/7 Blackboard phone service is located in Reston, Virginia and

is available at 866-818-1242.

Public Disclosure (10.1 – 10.9) and Integrity (11.1 – 11.3 and 11.7)

Mount Wachusett Community College uses a wide-variety of publications to inform the communities that it serves of its programs and offerings. Print publications are generally available electronically. The college catalog, the student handbook, the course brochures, and the MWCC website are the major sources of college information. Along with these, the college provides information through on-campus open house events, various pamphlets, brochures, flyers, reports, radio campaigns, TV spots, news releases, newsletters, electronic signs, in-house video monitors, and bulletin board presentations.

To comply with the MCCC Memorandum of Agreement, faculty interaction plans (MCCC Form DE-2) are posted on the Distance Learning Demonstration website in the Course Information area.

Future Plans

Mission and Purposes -- As part of the spring 2006 implementation of the college's Strategic Planning Online initiative a mission statement for MWCC's distance learning program was created. "The Distance Learning Department works with Academic Affairs, Lifelong Learning, Information Systems and Services, and media services to encourage the use and development of the college's instructional/mediated technology that enhance quality teaching and learning and institutional advancement. The director coordinates and trains faculty and staff in the use of the college's learning management system and other online and classroom media that support instruction. The director plans and guides the development and implementation of the college's online credit offerings and represents MWCC as a liaison to the Massachusetts Colleges Online consortium that develops and coordinates statewide distance learning initiatives." The mission statement will be rewritten as staffing issues and college infrastructure are modified.

Planning and Evaluation – The director of distance learning serves on the vice president of academic affairs' Academic Council, the president's Executive Council and is a liaison to Massachusetts Colleges Online. This involvement assists the college to plan and implement the strategic vision for distance learning and recommend future programming. The director is part of an MCO sub-committee that is analyzing quality issues for online courses and helping to develop a state-wide quality assurance plan.

The new MCCC faculty distance learning contract contains a revision that incorporates use of the University of Washington Instructional Assessment System's Student Evaluation Form for online courses, which will be implemented in the near future. This should provide MWCC with fresh insights into student perception of the online learning experience.

Organization and Governance – Budget permitting, the addition of the position of instructional designer in the near future will assist the college in its online course development. This addition will also assist MWCC in its involvement with other state-wide MCO online instruction development for other state agencies.

Programs and Instruction – Now that MWCC has finalized its core competencies for its programs, the distance learning courses will need to follow the same assessment mechanisms to ensure that all courses and programs meet the learning based outcomes developed on a program and course-by-course basis.

The college plans to increase the number of online programs and courses based on needs assessments and student and faculty interest. It is hoped that MWCC can continue to work with ongoing MCO initiatives to pool the resources of member institutions to support state-wide programs in criminal justice and hospitality management.

Faculty – The addition of the instructional designer position will assist the distance learning program to continue and improve its faculty development efforts. Faculty will be continually encouraged to view models of exemplary online courses. For example, MWCC faculty were given access to view the 16 MCO Course of Distinction award winners in June 2006.

Student Services/Library and Information Resources – The implementation of the MWCC/MCO/Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium eTutoring program in the fall 2006 will be a major step to ensure that online students have access to the same support services that on-campus students currently have. The MWCC Library is well on its way to make online access to its services equal to that of on-campus access. The college will continue its ongoing plans to provide equal access to admissions and career counselors.

Public Disclosure – As part of the college's effort to clearly communicate with all students about course selection, the office of distance learning will continue to work with ISS staff, the registrar's office, institutional research, and Academic Affairs staff to identify possible strategies to clearly identify distance learning courses within the web registration environment.