

Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students

of

Holyoke Community College

by

An Evaluation Team representing the
New England Commission of Higher Education

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

October 4 – 7, 2020

The members of the team:

Chairperson: Dr. Scott E. Knapp, Retired President, Central Maine Community College, Auburn, ME

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Observer: Dr. Robert Awkward, Assistant Commissioner for Academic Effectiveness, Massachusetts Department of Higher Education Boston, MA

This report represents the views of the evaluation committee as interpreted by the chairperson. Its content is based on the committee's evaluation of the institution with respect to the Commission's criteria for accreditation. It is a confidential document in which the comments are made in good faith. The report is prepared both as an educational service to the institution and to assist the Commission in making a decision about the institution's accreditation status.

New England Commission of Higher Education

Preface Page to the Team Report

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

Date form completed: October 7,2020

Name of Institution: Holyoke Community College

1. History: Year chartered or authorized 1946 Year first degrees awarded 1948

2. Type of control: State City Religious Group;
specify: _____

Private, not-for-profit Other; specify:

 Proprietary

3. Degree level:

Associate Baccalaureate Masters Professional Doctorate

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

	Full-time	Part-time	FTE	Retention ^a	Graduation ^b	# Degrees ^c
Associate	1440	2207	2529.4	56%	22%	763
Baccalaureate						
Graduate						

(a) full-time 1st to 2nd year (b) 3 or 6 year graduation rate (c) number of degrees awarded most recent year

5. Student debt:

	Most Recent Year	One Year Prior	Two Years Prior
Three-year Cohort Default Rate	14.4	15.3	13.2
Three-year Loan Repayment Rate	49%	50%	53%

	Associate	Baccalaureate	Graduate

Average % of graduates leaving with debt	10%		
Average amount of debt for graduates	\$7,990		

6. **Number of current faculty:** Full-time 116 Part-time 230 FTE 184.44

7. **Current fund data for most recently completed fiscal year:** (Specify year: 2020 DRAFT)

(Double click in any cell to enter spreadsheet. Enter dollars in millions, e.g., \$1,456,200 = \$1.456)

Revenues		Expenses	
Tuition	\$11.192	Instruction	\$27.337
Gov't Appropriations	30.744	Research	0
Gifts/Grants/Endowment	19.825	General	37.230
Auxiliary Enterprises	0.133	Auxiliary Enterprises	0.306
Other	1.349	Other	0.338
Total	\$63.243	Total	\$65.211

8. **Number of off-campus locations:**

In-state Other U.S. _____ International _____ Total

9. **Number of degrees and certificates offered electronically:**

Programs offered entirely on-line 14 Programs offered 50-99% on-line 48

10. **Is instruction offered through a contractual relationship?**

No Yes Specify program(s): _____

Introduction

The Evaluation Team conducted a comprehensive evaluation visit to Holyoke Community College, Holyoke, Massachusetts, from October 4 through 7, 2020. Due to the pandemic, the visit was conducted virtually through video conferencing and telephonic interviews. One member of the team conducted a physical visit to the College on October 6. Each team member conducted both group and individual interviews. Large-scale forums were conducted separately for faculty, staff, and students. Two team members met with the Board of Trustees. All together the team met with 110 faculty (full and part time), 124 staff, 59 administrators, 125 students, 7 trustees, and the College president. Overall, the team found the College community to be candid, forthcoming, and pleasantly helpful.

The visit was based on a self-study report prepared by a broadly representative committee of the College. The self-study report proved to be an honest, accurate description of the College. Other documentation provided by the College included the catalog, strategic plan, financial statements, marketing publications, and capital plan. The team appreciates the exhaustive self-study that included electronic links to key exhibits. A review of these documents before and during the visit, the team chair's preliminary virtual visit, the virtual visit itself together have provided the basis for the information and the evaluative judgements contained in the nine sections of this report which address the *Standards for Accreditation* of the New England Commission of Higher Education.

1. *Mission and Purposes*

Between 2005 and 2018 the College was guided by a 485-word mission statement. Prior to 2017 some discontent with the lengthy mission statement emerged. Many thought the statement out of date and not sufficiently reflective of current priorities and values. The arrival of a new president in January of 2017 provided an opportunity to begin to think more broadly and differently about the future of the institution and the mission. A broad-based strategic planning process was initiated with a review of the mission at the forefront.

The new mission statement adopted in 2018 was very short. It read simply: Educate. Inspire. Connect. Prior to adoption the statement received some criticism from the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education as being too short. The criticism was short-lived with the Department consenting to the adoption of the mission.

At first glance the Department's criticism is understandable. The statement is most certainly short. Moreover, standing on its own the statement could be applied to many educational institutions including universities, medical schools, business schools, and even elementary and secondary schools. The statement does not set forth the institution's distinctive character and does not in and of itself to identify priorities and provide the basis for the evaluation of the institution against the Commission's Standards.

With all of the above said, however, it is critical to note that the mission statement seems to be embraced by the College community and even loved by many in that community. The statement can be found on promotional materials such as booklets, buttons, and posters. T-shirts project the mission as well. The statement appears beneath the signature block on many faculty and staff emails. The president advises that she uses the statement as jumping off point in oral presentations to talk in depth about the College. The 2020 Self-Study itself is an example of how the College amplifies, clarifies, and expands upon the three words in the mission statement. In the Self-Study, multiple paragraphs follow each of the three words, providing concrete examples of how that part of the mission is applied.

The College suggests in writing that the mission, vision, values, and student experience statement should be taken together as an embodiment of “the College’s commitment to providing an outstanding educational experience that puts the student at the center” of what it does. (The student value statement might be called a statement of purposes at some colleges.) When the mission is looked at in this manner—in the context of the mission, vision, values and student experience statement—the mission does take on an expanded meaning that does differentiate the College, set forth its unique character, identify priorities and provide the basis for the evaluation of the institution against the Commission’s Standards.

The current Strategic Plan expires in FY2022. At that time the College intends to review the mission, vision, values and student experience statement to determine their effectiveness in guiding the College.

2. Planning and Evaluation

Holyoke Community College (HCC) has demonstrated its planning and evaluation as systematic, comprehensive, broad-based, integrated, and appropriate to the institution as initiated in the strategic plan and followed by the subsequent actions. The Self-Study has sufficient evidence that the design process of the strategic plan has led to a structure in which HCC’s mission, vision, values, and student experience statement will be achieved through the successful implementation of its actionable plans.

The Office of Institutional Research (OIR) has five full-time employees (a director, two analysts, one shared position with another department, and an administrative assistant) and one part-time employee. The office manages all kinds of data requests for the College community. Data usage is lavishly demonstrated in HCC’s Self-Study. According to the interview information, OIR is effectively meeting a high volume of data needs from the college community. The College community is also impressed with OIR’s data visualization by Tableau.

Planning: HCC was crafting a new mission-relevant strategic plan through the extensive collaboration of the entire College community with the guidance of the consulting firm CampusWorks as it was at the same time creating a mission statement radically revised from

485 words to three (Educate, Inspire, Connect). The Strategic Plan FY2019-22 has four frameworks: 1. Teaching & Learning; 2. Inclusion & Student Success; 3. Workforce Development & Transfer; and 4. Sustainability. It aligns well with the objectives of the Department of Higher Education in Massachusetts and the four areas of concerns that were cited in the last NEASC comprehensive report: Reduction of the equity gap on retention and graduation rates; maintaining more student services on all student modalities, e.g., evening students; improving information and educational technologies; and maintaining financial stability, including deferred maintenance needs. Altogether, these four frameworks have a total of nine objectives, 21 measurable outcomes (with the projection of 4 percentage-point improvement by 2022 in the first two frameworks) and 20 action items. The HCC Board of Trustees (BOT) has a Strategic Plan Committee authorized to monitor the progress of the Strategic Plan FY2019-22 and to provide resources for the implementation teams in areas of funding, partnership and policy. In response to the feedback from the community in the COVID-19 crisis, HCC's strategic plan is currently in the process of transitioning from the five (5) large implementation teams to twelve (12) smaller project-based groups in Year 2. Many academic and student success initiatives can be traced back to the document of the Strategic Plan FY2019-22: establishment of the Center for Excellence, standardization of one-year scheduling, promotion of credits for prior learning (CPL), and proliferation of online teaching and learning.

The urgency of the four strategic plan frameworks can be understood when the most current data available at IPEDS is compared with the peak enrollment (AY0910) data:

Data Items	Most Recent IPEDS Data	IPEDS Data at the Peak Year
12-Month Unduplicated Headcount (HC)	7,113 (AY1718)	9,937 (AY0910)
Total FTE	3,620 (AY1718)	5,241 (AY0910)
Full-time (fall enrollment HC)	1,998 (2019)	3,973 (2009)
Part-time (fall enrollment HC)	2,888 (2019)	3,500 (2009)
% White (fall enrollment)	57% (2018)	71% (2009)
% Latinx (fall enrollment)	26% (2018)	18% (2009)
% Tuition & fees (total revenues)	16% (2018)	27% (2009)
% State appropriation	36% (2018)	45% (2009)

Currently, HCC does not have a financial plan in place after the November 12, 2014, draft of the Financial Outlook covering FY16-FY20 expired. However, HCC collaborated with Westfield State University and Northern Essex Community College to acquire a new financial planning system to streamline the budget development process. The Questica Budget and Financial Planning System has recently been implemented for budget preparation. HCC also relied on the Donohue Institute of the University of Massachusetts to make projections on national and local demographics for HCC's financial planning. HCC is able to balance the budget and achieve

financial stability even though it is acknowledged that accurate financial projection under the time of uncertainty is very challenging.

HCC does not have a facilities master plan, but both Deferred Maintenance Plan and Capital Improvement Plan FY2020 - FY2024 are guiding the facilities planning, according to the Self-Study. The former is a spreadsheet that offers the amount of money on the facilities improvement in the five academic years, such as the Bartley Center roof replacement, Lesley Phillips Theater (Study, Design and Construction), Resurface Plaza, Temporary Boiler for Kittredge, Instructional Space, and Accessibility Study. The latter is a short description of all these facilities projects. HCC is committed almost to \$10 million over the period of five years.

Information Technology is one of the designated areas for HCC's process improvement. It has a plan and Sikich (a consulting firm) was retained to guide the IT Office on the development of IT Road Map, a blueprint for the prioritization of the computer applications. Although it was a concern in last comprehensive report, the College's IT infrastructure has been tremendously improved. Its virtual infrastructure, laptops, and WI-FI in the parking lots helped the students greatly on remote learning during the COVID-19 crisis. The continuous development of information technology was part of the Strategic Plan FY19-22 and it has a steering committee advising the College leadership on the matter of information technology improvement.

As the enrollment continues to decline and the state appropriation is shrinking, HCC's Institutional Advancement Office spearheads to secure funding for improving the quality of education and increasing the educational opportunity for the students. Its development plan is a two-page document listing the goals and objectives of the Office that align with the Strategic Plan FY2019-22 although it does not have the specific outcomes and metrics with the specific completion dates.

HCC's effectiveness of contingency planning is illustrated in its management of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Before it started, HCC already had the arrangement with Westfield State University and state system to deal with the emergency planning. When the pandemic started, the College followed the state protocol. All classes were converted into online modality. Many faculty had online experience and they led those faculty with less experience. The Center for Excellence played a key role in remote-teaching training; it provided a total of 333 unique workshops in 508.75 training hours with 2,235 attendants from March 16 to September 11. Information Technology also had the virtual infrastructure in place to assist faculty and students when HCC went completely online. HCC's Institutional Advancement Office was also critical in the process of crisis management by providing financial support for the students.

Since educational quality, recruitment, dual enrollment, and online education are going to be their future foci, planning documentations of these topics are expected although the Strategic Plan FY2019-22 has been the foundation of all plans and actions in HCC's community. Yet, academic plan (with the focus on student learning outcome, dual enrollment, and online education) and strategic enrollment plan (with the focus on recruitment) are absent.

Evaluation: As the primary planning tool in academic affairs, the program review process is a two-semester process conducted every five years for each program that is not externally accredited. It has its formal protocol updated in September 2019 by the Office of Planning & Assessment. The program review data include program enrollment demographics, course completion rates, retention rates, graduation rates, transfer rates, degree conferred, licensure exam pass rates, employment data, and CCSSE data. The program faculty critically reflect on the program with data and the appropriate outside reviewers assess the reflections. Among the total of ninety-three (93) programs, only four did not have their expected review: Hospitality Management Transfer (B051), Hospitality Management Career (B056), Nutrition & Foods (M071), and Health & Fitness (M115). Their reviews have to be delayed for one year due to NECHE self-study. In addition, the University Without Walls Program did not have any review because it is a unique degree designed in partnership with the UMass University Without Walls Program to allow the adult students to transfer seamlessly into its program.

However, working with the data from Gray's Associates (a consultant firm), HCC was able to reach a consensus to suspend 14 degree/certificate programs, grow or fix 32 existing programs, and explore 5 new program possibilities. As the materials from the external perspective, the extensive data was presented in the Program Portfolio Strategy Workshop on August 28-29, 2019. It included Student Demand, Competitive Intensity, and Employment (i.e., employer demand and job opportunities). Because of the decision on the prioritization of academic programs, HCC has undergone some program and course reorganizations. For example, the suspension of both Photography and Electronic Media programs led to these courses moving into Visual Arts & CMTA (Communications, Media, and Theater Arts) options.

Fall headcount enrollment went up gradually from 5,754 in 2000 to 7,473 in 2009 and then steadily declined to 4,886 in 2019. Many planned activities in student affairs are following the strategic objectives of Strategic Plan FY2019-22. Noteworthy is the adoption of multiple measures for placement, which reduced substantially the percentage gap between the under-represented minorities and White students on developmental course placement: the percent of the first-time degree-seeking Latino students being placed in developmental English declined from 51% in 2018 to 43% in 2019 whereas the African American counterparts dropped from 52% to 45%. In developmental math, the Latino students' percentage dropped 21% and the African American students 20%. One may wonder whether the placement tests had been woefully misplacing so many minority students and whether the minority students do in fact excel in the courses that require a lot of writing and math skills. Another effective strategic implementation is the team-based case management approach to onboarding new students, such as MAS, STRIVE, New Directions, and Pathways.

While teaching evaluations are being used to evaluate the teaching effectiveness of the faculty, the CCSSE survey and Hope Lab Basic Needs Security Report are used for assessing the learning engagement and housing/food insecurity of the students, respectively.

Although the self-study does not mention the evaluation and assessment of functionalities in the student service area, HCC is going to use the mobile applications to streamline the services.

3. *Organization and Governance*

The self-study submitted by Holyoke Community College details an organization and governance structure that includes the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education and a local Board of Trustees (BOT). Documents presented to the visiting team show a clear working order of the institution in relation to the BOT.

Governing Board: The governing board is legally constituted by and derives its authority and organizational structure from the Governor of the Commonwealth and the Great and General Court (legislature). The BOT is vested with the authority and responsibility for the College's operations. Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Section 22 sets out the Board's duties and powers.

The Board's responsibilities include personnel, fiscal, academic, and general authority. The BOT conducts its work through standing committees that include: Advocacy; Audit and Finance; Bylaws and Governance; Nominating; Presidential Evaluation; Strategic Plan; and Equity and they see the mission of HCC is embodied in the recent strategic plan and the mission of HCC to "Educate-Inspire- and Connect."

In interviews with members of the BOT, we found a shared understanding of the roles that the BOT plays in the governance of the institution. Interviews also show how the "organizational structure, decision-making processes, and policies are clear and consistent with its mission and support institutional effectiveness."

Standard 3.8 states that "The board systematically develops, ensures, and enhances its own effectiveness through orientation, professional development, and periodic evaluation." The self-study reports that "New trustees are provided orientation training by the College president and the General Counsel's Office of the Massachusetts Association of Community Colleges, and trustees are required annually to complete an online training program through the State Ethics Commission and comply with all conflict of interest laws, policies, and regulations. The BOT holds annual retreats to reflect upon issues central to its role and the College's mission." However, in interviews with board members, they report that the professional development of board members includes statewide training that highlights trends in higher education but there is no formal program for the local board.

In regards to self-evaluation the board feels that while no formal process currently exists, but stated, "they are doing a good job". Assessment of their effectiveness is on the agenda for an upcoming board meeting.

The board reports evaluating the president with a combination of survey instruments, interviews with stakeholders, and self-assessment. The board reports that they *delegate to the chief executive authority to manage the institution*. There is "robust intentional

communication” between the board and chief executive with a focus on key metrics and data. Weekly zoom meetings with the chief executive and board chair are part of a “great working relationship”.

Internal Governance: Interviews with various stakeholder groups showed that faculty and students feel that the system of governance involves their participation. The system is “very inclusive” according to students and they feel they have a very good relationship with faculty, staff, and administration. Students highlighted the relationship of student senators with executive team members and the building of relationships with faculty through the local advisory council. In addition students attending the open forum were unanimous in their contention that HCC’s governance structure and organizational culture allow them a voice in matters in which they have an interest.

Faculty voiced a concern that while they had good participation in the various committees and decisions made through these committees were normally adhered to, these groups only serve in an “advisory” role to management and could be disregarded when it came to some “hot button” issues.

The self-study appraisal section for Standard 3 (Governance) states that “In FY2021 the Rules Committee of the Senate will complete its audit of Senate Committees and finalize its recommendations for the amendment of the constitution regarding committees and their charges.” The need for this change in the internal governance structure was bolstered in multiple meetings with staff, faculty, and administration. There was a general feeling that the governance structure is out of date.

Among the concerns voiced by the College community were that some standing committees have not met in years, there is no college-wide assessment committee, and many ad hoc committees exist outside of the formal structure. Staff voiced a concern about having only “a marginal voice in governance”. Non-union personnel (administrators, deans, directors) and AFSCME union members have no formal role in the internal governance structure and there is no college-wide body that includes all of the stakeholders.

4. The Academic Program

Introduction: Since 1964, Holyoke Community College has offered associate degrees in a diverse collection of traditional academic as well as applied health programs based on the College mission statement of “Educate. Inspire. Connect.” Programs range from the Liberal Arts and Sciences to Business, from Psychology to Criminal Justice, and from Nursing to Veterinary Science. In 2005, HCC expanded to online learning, and in 2017, welcomed students to the MGM Culinary Arts Institute in downtown Holyoke. The full range of academic programs serves a diverse population of students from the greater Holyoke, Chicopee, and Springfield, Massachusetts area, and beyond. Transfer-oriented students choose from 110 transfer opportunities with 30 institutions, both within the Massachusetts Department of Higher

Education system, as well as many private colleges and universities in New England and beyond. During the years from 2013-2017, 48% of all graduates transferred to a four-year institution within two years of graduating from HCC, as stated in Standard 4 of the HCC self-study.

Based on syllabi, degree program requirements, Program Reviews, and published Student Learning Outcomes at both the course, General Education, and Program levels, the academic programs and course offerings display strong curriculum development and thoughtful implementation. Six programs hold outside accreditation, attesting to the quality opportunities offered by HCC: Culinary Arts (ACF), Music (NASM), RN and PN licensures for Nursing (ACEN), Radiologic Technology (JRCERT), and Veterinary Technology (AVMA/CVTEA). (See E-data form E1, Part B on pp. 180-181 of the HCC self-study.

Assuring Academic Quality: Faculty, in consultation with department chairs, division deans, and administrators, shepherd new course curricula through the Curriculum Committee and College Senate for final approval by the College president. Curriculum Management software enables timely signature approvals along the way, and ensures that all affected divisions are consulted so that the various needs of the College are met. For example, Transfer Services determines if the course will transfer to the intended four-year institutions. The registrar determines the correct parameters for the registration system. Department chairs and division deans ensure that classrooms, lab space, and necessary specialized equipment and supplies are available or obtainable. Sometimes curriculum initiation is driven by the administration, or by grant funding, but is always completed with faculty involvement.

Academic oversight includes the Deans' review of syllabi every semester to verify all required items are included, including course number, meeting times, course description, grading scheme, attendance policy, required materials, etc. The visiting team's review of 42 syllabi showed complete syllabi with appropriate amounts of work planned for complete semesters in a variety of lengths. Additionally, faculty report regular departmental and division meetings to discuss academic programs and course offerings.

The College's compilation of data in the E-series data form E1: Part A (pp. 168-179), shows extensive assessment by faculty at the course level via exams, projects, essays, portfolios, homework, group projects, etc. The team confirmed, from 25 Program Reviews, and the General Education Assessment Committee (GEAC) report from 2017, students are achieving success at some of the five General Education Outcomes (Critical Thinking, Effective Communication, Knowledge of Diversity, Quantitative Reasoning, and Information Literacy). Most programs reported assessing one or two of these prior to 2017, but did not report assessing all five of these outcomes on a yearly basis, and most did not report adjustments to programs or courses based on collected data. As for assessing whether students are achieving the Program Student Learning Outcomes (SLO), only a few departments are consistently doing this: English, Biology, Psychology and ESL and Early Childhood Education are notable examples. Most departments report robust IR data (retention, course completion, grade distribution, graduation rates, transfer rates) in their Program Reviews, but is not a sufficient substitute for making program changes based on assessment of the Programs' SLOs and the General Education Outcomes. In some cases, capstone courses, where assessment is scheduled, were

cancelled due to low enrollment, which impeded program assessment. Many Program Reviews speculate about how to improve programs based on course-level IR data and faculty impressions, rather than formally assessing all program SLOs and Gen Ed Outcomes.

Undergraduate Degree Programs/ Major or Concentration: At last count, HCC offers 21 program options in the A.A. degree, 42 A.S. degrees, one A.A.S. degree and 21 certificates. Between 2010 and 2020, HCC eliminated 26 programs to increase efficiency and reduce redundancy. Many of these suspensions took place after a two-day workshop with Gray Associates consultants in August 2019, which identified programs to “start, grow, fix or stop”. Constituents across HCC contributed to the analysis. The full group heard each division’s proposal, but “chose not to prioritize the implied requests for institutional resources. The group was informed that in choosing not to evaluate these proposals together, they were implicitly delegating the necessary prioritizing of initiatives to HCC’s senior leadership.” Gray Associates added a “market score” for each program in their final report, as well as jobs data. The HCC administration chose to suspend some programs, merge others, and contemplate other changes. Some realignments were implemented as recently as October, 2019.

Low enrollment most frequently led to mergers of programs, which seemed reasonable based on the Standard 4 data first forms. Mergers preserved important courses, giving students more choices within a revamped major. For example, Business programs with only 2-16 majors in recent years (Banking Option, Marketing Management, Administrative Professional Studies, Legal Studies, and Paralegal Transfer) were consolidated into two programs: Business Administration MassTransfer and Business Administration Career, with 308 and 83 majors, respectively. In second example, Sociology/ Anthropology was consolidated into the Critical Social Thought department, along with Economics, History, Philosophy and Geography. The team learned that since Sociology/ Anthropology is “resource neutral”, the change would have minimal effect on students who want to take those courses, which could be preserved, not eliminated. In a final example, the merger of Environmental Science, and the Clean Energy and Sustainability Program is planned. Gray Associates suggested developing more courses in sustainability (beer and cider, wine, cannabis), as those areas are projected to grow nationally. Continued research and assessment should guide future changes in programming, which may be necessary given continuing declines in student enrollment. Overall, the mergers and suspensions, although sometimes difficult, seemed consistent with program enrollment data in the Standard 4 data forms.

General Education: All of HCC’s degree and certificate programs include 23-26 general education credits that offer entry-level study in the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and mathematics. Additional general requirements in a given program sometime depend on transfer requirements after graduation. Course mapping in most Program Reviews relates the General Education Outcomes to the Program’s Student Learning Outcomes and furthermore, to individual courses in that program. This framework is useful for designing assessment projects to assess learning at the program level. A new college-wide graduation requirement of one Knowledge of Diversity course for students beginning in Fall 2020 arose out of the work of the GEAC and was approved through the governance structure, demonstrating continued oversight and forward planning.

HCC regularly offers a wide variety of integrative learning opportunities for students, including an Honors program complete with Honors courses and colloquia, 8-10 Learning Communities per semester, Service Learning which pairs courses/ instructors with 13 community organizations, and Academic Internships. These diverse opportunities serve to inspire students to further their learning, and connect students to other students, their professors, and their community, which is consistent with the Mission of the college. Students report enthusiasm for integrative learning, and increased success rates, as noted in the self-study. These innovative learning opportunities also align with Strategic Plan Strategy #1, Enhance and expand innovative teaching and learning practices that support quality education for all.

A plethora of programs exist to support students academically, some of which are described here. STRIVE (TRIO) offers mentoring and tutoring for first-generation college students. The College offers a robust English as a Second Language Program. (ESL). Students can take ESL courses on a credit or non-credit basis. There is also a comprehensive ESL tutoring program. A variety of CLEP, AP, challenge exams, and Credit for Prior Learning programs help students get started in degree programs without burdensome prerequisites. Dual Enrollment, Gateway, and Early College programs engage high school students, mostly on the HCC campus, and at Holyoke High School, with courses taught by HCC faculty. Fresh Start offers a clean slate for students returning to campus years after challenging semesters. LPN2RN helps LPN nurses earn their RN licensure. Graduation requirements are clearly spelled out in the catalog and on the website, and are easily accessible by students. Reverse transfer programs help students earn their HCC degrees even after they have transferred to a four-year school. Students report having access to all of the information, advising, and support they need to progress towards their goals. All together, these programs present unified concern and support for student success. Assessment in this area will help determine which efforts yield the most success for students going forward.

With the advent of nearly universal COVID-19 shutdowns in March of 2020, HCC instituted a comprehensive transition plan to move all courses into the online environment, with the exception of clinical lab courses teaching required skills. Many courses and programs were already taught online, so all students had unique logins and passwords to verify their identities, but not everyone was conversant in Moodle, Zoom, and other specialized software. The Center for Excellence, the Library, and Information Technology worked to train faculty on course delivery, and loan computers and hotspots to students. These various ongoing efforts are communicated in a weekly e-mail. Over the past ten years, the self-study stated that 73 percent of online students complete their courses (p. 67). The impact of COVID-19 on this statistic deserves continued assessment to foster student success during challenging times.

Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit: HCC ensures integrity in the award of academic credit by following practices common to American institutions of higher education. In accordance with Massachusetts DHE policy, the College Catalog and the Student Handbook, which are both available on the HCC website, state that “a credit hour is defined as the equivalent of one (1) hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two (2) hours of out-of class student work for fifteen (15) weeks. One instructional hour shall be equal to fifty (50) minutes of classroom/direct faculty instruction, or laboratory/studio or sixty (60)

minutes of clinical, practicum/fieldwork, internship or co-op.” It is evident from examination of course schedules, syllabi for a cross section of courses, (face-to-face and online), as well as courses in condensed summer and 7-week formats, and in conversations with faculty, that the assignment of credit follows the College’s policy. Moreover, conversations with faculty confirmed that allocation of credit according to the policy is examined when a new course is developed or revised and considered for approval by the Curriculum Committee, College Senate and the president.

5. *Students*

Admissions: Holyoke Community College is a public two-year associate degree- granting institution that is open access and has a good understanding of the students it serves. Fall 2019 enrollment data show that out of 4,886 degree and non-degree seeking students, 33 percent are adult learners, 59 percent are part-time, 63 percent are female identified, 42 percent identify as minority students, and 28 percent are specifically Latinx. Fifty-two percent are first generation, and 81 percent of fall 2019 first time, full-time degree seeking students received some financial aid. In the graduating class of 2019, students ranged in age from 18 to 79. The overall percentage of minority students has increased (from 38 percent in 2015 to 42 percent in 2019). Since the last mid-term report, total enrollments at Holyoke Community College have decreased by 22 percent over the past five years and 34 percent over the past ten years. More of HCC’s students are part time so FTE is declining faster than student headcount. HCC’s typical student has changed and is likely to be first generation, female, Latinx part-time and taking an online course. Students are taking more online courses which are being offered in larger numbers. Distance courses represented 23 percent of all credit courses in fall 2019 compared to 15 percent in fall 2015. The fall 2019 headcount is 15.1 percent lower than fall 2000 headcount and fall 2019 full-time equivalent is 12.3 percent below fall 2000 FTE. High school populations in Massachusetts are projected to decline through 2031. Additionally, the College faces competition from for-profit and four-year colleges.

To address the steep decline in enrollment, HCC is focusing more on retention and has seen Fall-to-spring retention rates improve by two percentage points. The retention rates for non-minority FTDS is up four percentage points and the retention rate for minority students is up two percentage points so the gap between non-minority and minority is increasing. HCC is working hard to ensure equity is a priority by providing a voice for students through the student diversity committee and faculty/staff through the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion committee. Co-curricular activities including panel discussions and safe spaces are available to students, as well as a current review of policies for inclusivity.

One of the key factors HCC has implemented to impact retention is the strong student supports and wrap around services provided. These are a strength for the institution. Students benefit from many supports including The Thrive Center which provides assistance with housing, food, healthcare, financial planning, and all types of assistance at no charge to the student. HCC also

has a strong team-based case management system that is being initiated through the strategic planning process. Students have assigned tutors, counselors, and advisors through the TRIO program and within specialized programs such as MAS, STEM Starter and Pathways. The Center for Academic Program Support is available to students 24/7 and includes learning coaches. The WellConnect Student Assistance program is available for mental health support and the President's Student Emergency Fund supports students with financial emergencies that would impact their ability to continue in school. After speaking with students from a variety of groups, they feel very supported and pleased with their access to the supports needed to be successful at HCC.

Based on the outcome of internal scans that indicated that some operational processes were not meeting students' expectations and needs, College leadership implemented changes to improve student experience including streamlined enrollment processes, eliminating drops for non-payment and providing a full year of scheduled courses.

Additionally, new placement measures were implemented which decreased placement into developmental education by utilizing multiple measures. Completion rates indicate that multiple measures contributed to improved course completion rates in gateway courses. HCC's strategic plan includes decreasing the number of students enrolled in developmental classes to help students with completion. This strategy is based on national research and is supported by the data from HCC.

Another strategy used by the College to increase enrollment includes implementing a CRM system that not only serves as the streamlined application portal but also enables more accurate and timely collection of student information, more efficient responses to inquiries, and better data storage and organization to enable targeted marketing and tracking of results.

While the College is working to develop plans to increase student recruitment, there does not appear to be a sense of urgency about implementing these plans.

Student Services and Co-Curricular Experiences: At Holyoke Community College, Student Services and Academic Affairs have recently combined and reports to the Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs who reports to the College President. The written self-study did not include information relating to personnel, facilities, technology, and funding as it relates to 5.17 and the organization of student services. After meeting with the Student Services team, they shared the training, credentialing, and structure of student services and confirmed that the division has sufficient staff who are well trained to represent and address the needs of students effectively. The group shared that the merger with academic affairs has been very positive and has enhanced the student experience. When asked about adequate funding it was shared that even though budget decreases have occurred each year because of enrollment declines, funding was adequate to meet student needs. Student Services has been very much involved as a participant, planner, and implementer in the changes and evolution of the College. Student services staff endeavor to provide an environment dedicated to students

realizing their full potential, whether on-campus or online. After speaking with students, they confirmed that the website was effective in linking them to services, the Student Handbook which includes information on conduct, the complaint process and policies and procedures, and resources to assist them. New technology including a mobile app has been added to support students in the remote environment.

At the operational level, Student Services offers all the standard services and programs expected at a community college of its size and character, including intercollegiate athletics programs, student life programs, health and counseling services, and orientation programs. HCC utilizes the CCSSE, the Hope Center Survey, and internal surveys to gather information to identify student needs, provide appropriate services and resources, lower barriers to success, and afford equity. The athletics department ensures that student athletes are focused on academics and receive the supports needed to be successful academically and as an athlete.

A mandatory new student orientation for all new first-time degree seeking students is offered as part of the First -Year Experience. An online orientation is offered to students who cannot attend in person. Family and Friends sessions are also included. Holyoke Community College offers programs for distinct student populations including New Directions for Adult Learners, Pathways, STRIVE, the THRIVE Center, ACT, and WellConnect. The Center for Academic Program Support provides in person and 24/7 online tutoring and The Office of Disability and Deaf Services works with students and faculty.

Of particular note, the THRIVE Center was developed after the results of an internal survey conducted to assess equity, specifically student needs in the areas of housing, food insecurity, and childcare. The THRIVE Center offers an array of free services for students and community members facing non-academic barriers. It operates a food pantry and meals on the go, assistance accessing SNAP and MassHealth, financial coaching and budget planning, and help with poor credit.

Student Life offers a diverse collection of activities and organizations including co-curricular participation. Student governance occurs through the Student Senate, which plans and offers activities that enrich the campus and the surrounding community. Students confirmed that they felt heard by the administration, had a seat on college committees and were comfortable that their voices are heard.

Based on the results of several surveys, HCC has implemented or plans to implement changes to operations. Data from the CCSSE indicated that two areas HCC needed to work on included: helping you cope with your non-academic responsibilities and career counseling. To address these two concerns, HCC opened a newly renovated Campus Center that included housing MAS, Student Engagement and Success Initiatives, the Advising, Career and Transfer Center and NSO. This enables staff to link these areas and bring visibility to co-curricular activities. The college is also moving toward early career exploration.

A Mental Health Task Force was established at HCC to review mental health needs. A proposal was submitted suggesting implementation of a three-pronged comprehensive approach to mental health that would bring a mental health coordinator position to the campus.

HCC is experiencing increases in the student loan default rate and has the second highest default rate among community colleges in Massachusetts. The College has contracted with Inceptia to reach out to students in delinquent status and has offered in-person student loan exit interviews to begin to address this problem.

HCC plans to implement team-based case management for all students, fully utilize CRM, launch the student mobile app, Unified, and acquire a data tracking tool to allow swipe card access to continue to respond to needs that have surfaced during surveys that impact the student experience.

The final area in Standard 5 (5.20) asks for evidence of regular and systematic evaluation of student services to advance institutional purposes. Surveys such as CCSSE are utilized to impact the student experience, however, there is no evidence of regular assessment of areas within student services such as financial aid, admissions, advising, student life, where the program itself was evaluated and changes were made based on feedback from the evaluation to improve.

6. Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship

Faculty and Academic Staff: Holyoke Community College (HCC) has a faculty of 120 full-time and 271 part-time as of the 2019-2020 academic year. The number of male faculty is 145 and that of female faculty is 250. As reported in the Data First forms and noted in the report, 31 percent of the full-time faculty and 12 percent of part-time faculty hold doctorate degrees. According to the National Data Center, the percentage of community colleges faculty holding doctorate degrees is 12 percent nationally. All full-time faculty and 93 percent of the part-time faculty have a master's degree. Those holding the rank of full professor total 74, associate professor 15, assistant professor 19, and instructor 12. According to the Data First forms, 85 of the full-time faculty are tenured. A new full-time faculty is integrated into the College through a one semester new faculty orientation that meets weekly. A new part-time faculty receives a two-hours orientation a week before class starts.

The number of full-time faculty has decreased from 132 in 2017 to 120 in 2020. Based on the Data First form, between 2017 and 2020, ten full-time faculty members have departed and 20 full-time have retired. The report also notes that the decrease is due to retirement, resignation, and moving to a different location. The number of part-time faculty has also decreased from 330 in 2017 and 271 in 2020.

HCC faculty and staff belong to Massachusetts Community College Council (MCCC) union. MCCC contract includes guidelines on faculty teaching load, salary, academic freedom, faculty evaluation process. Non-tenured faculty are evaluated every year until they are awarded tenure, and tenured faculty are evaluated every three years post-tenure. Part-time faculty are evaluated by division deans during their first or second semester at the college but at least once before they earn seniority.

Faculty and Staff Diversity: As noted in the report, 24 percent of HCC staff identify themselves as non-white. On the faculty side, 86 percent of full-time and 85 percent of part-time faculty are white, 6 percent Full-time and 5 percent part-time faculty are Hispanic/Latinx, 5 percent of full-time and 8 percent of part-time faculty are Black/African-American, and 3 percent of full-time and 2 percent of part-time faculty are Asian. The student body is 58 percent white, 28 percent Hispanic/Latinx, 6 percent Black/African-American, and 3 percent Asian. HCC has been recognized as a Hispanic Serving Institution(HSI) by the U.S. Department of Education since fall 2016. Based on the team meetings with some members of the administration and faculty, HCC has been making an effort to diversify its faculty to reflect the student body and it plans to continue the effort. The plan includes recruitment of its own graduates.

Advising: According the MCCC contract faculty advising is limited to 18 students per semester. According to the report, some faculty advise less than 18 but professional advisors can carry advising load between 30 and 200 students. In order to create equity in advising, students are assigned to different academic advisors every semester. The report notes that the reassignment of students to a different academic advisor every semester and the inconsistency in the faculty course reassignment as concerns but plans are underway to address them.

Professional Development: Faculty and staff participate in professional development activities by attending professional days that the college holds every semester, by attending workshops facilitated by faculty and staff, and by participating in local and national professional conferences and workshops. Faculty and staff also participate in the Center for Excellence (CFE) that was established in 2019 and has been providing various professional development activities. Faculty and staff attend workshops that include training on the use of Moodle-HCC's course management system, best teaching practices, and equity and inclusive pedagogies. CFE publishes professional Development activities calendar on the college website and includes daily workshops and IT Drop In times. Experienced faculty and staff serve as internal presenters and workshop leaders for CFE. CFE also invites external presenters and workshop leaders. The report notes that CFE offered 447 workshops between September 2019 and May 2020 with 1,788 attendees. As stated in the report, the College has a limited fund available at departments for faculty to attend and present at conference and workshops. The process and Application Form for Professional development money are published on the college's website. There was no data on professional development activities prior to 2019.

Teaching and Learning: HCC's full-time and part-time faculty exercise their academic freedom as stated in the MCCC contract. The faculty are responsible for curriculum proposal and revision, course delivery, textbook selection, setting program and course level learning

outcomes and assessments, and developing engaging, inclusive, and innovative pedagogies. Teaching is the primary role of faculty at HCC. Faculty and staff also serve on various College governance committees and search committees. The regular faculty teaching load is 30 credit hours per year with 28 to 32 students. The report notes that some faculty have less teaching loads due to course reassignment. Faculty are reassigned to perform activities including serving as department chair, serving on General Education Assessment Committee, coordinating and participating in Integrative Learning Programs, and other tasks relevant to the college. As noted in the report, the number of course reassignments have been increasing to about 130 course assignments per semester. The report notes that division deans are working on a process for limiting the number of course reassignments per faculty and on providing equal opportunity for all faculty to engage in activities that support the college mission. As reported in the self-study, the percentage of courses taught by full-time faculty has increased from 40 percent in 2017 to 46 percent in fall 2019. Based on HCC Data Notes, the enrollment for full-time equivalent (FTE) students has decreased by 43 percent from 4,686 in spring 2010 to 2,749 in spring 2020.

The College prides itself with the number of online courses it was able to offer pre-pandemic. As noted in the report, HCC now offers online course in almost every degree program. HCC offers 7 degree programs and 3 certificate programs fully online. The same faculty who teach the courses on-ground also teach the online course in order to maintain consistency and quality. HCC developed a Summer Online Teaching Academy (SOTA) in 2016. Faculty interested in teaching online course attend SOTA every May to June to develop online teaching skills and adopt best practices. As noted in the report, online offering has increased from 15 percent in 2015 to 23 percent in 2019 and the number of students taking online course has increased from 38 percent in 2015 to 48 percent in 2019.

7. Institutional Resources

HCC has an expressed commitment to equity. A new president started in January 2017, the College's first biracial LGBT female president. The College has made strides in diversity, with faculty diversity increasing from 6.4 percent; AFSCME employees from 15 percent to 28 percent; MCC-UP from 13.3 percent to 25 percent and NUP employees from 7.4 percent to 23 percent. 86 percent of faculty are white, but only 58 percent of students. While these increases are laudable, the faculty and staff do not accurately reflect the makeup of the student population.

In the last ten years enrollment has declined a dramatic 43 percent. In the last three years staffing has declined 8 percent from 991 to 909. There are 120 full-time, down from 132 in 2017 and part-time faculty went from 330 in 2017 to 208 in 2020. In conversations with management and employees, there was lack of a clear plan to appropriately align staffing with enrollment. The College had taken previous actions focusing on reducing the number of employees below 18.5 hours, laying off 33 employees. The vice president of finance and administration indicated this would create a structural financial problem for the institution.

Faculty credentials are impressive: 31 percent of the faculty have a doctorate and 93 percent hold master's degrees. The faculty are dedicated to giving students a robust classroom experience.

The College operates under collective bargaining agreements for faculty and staff, adjunct faculty, AFSCME for clerical staff, facilities and campus safety and Non-Union Professionals (NUP). The dean of human resources indicated that AFSCME employees may not be represented across the governance structure. COVID has impacted collective bargaining contracts, in particular negotiations occurring regarding compensation, workload and evaluation.

The faculty and staff handbook is available in hard copy, but not online. Personnel policies and forms are available on the college's website. Evaluations of part-time faculty has not been formalized.

There is a professional development committee of the College senate. In addition, there are professional days for faculty and staff every semester. The Strategic Plan Team A included a focus on professional development that resulted in the creation of the Center for Excellence. This was mentioned repeatedly at Zoom meetings as being a thriving resource for training opportunities. The Lumina grant will be focusing on professional development opportunities for faculty and staff mentoring students of color.

An ombudsperson and chief cultural officer at the request of faculty. This is the only ombudsperson in the Commonwealth's community college system. Although there was nervousness regarding employment due to declining enrollment, most employees seemed passionate about serving students, believing in the mission of HCC, and there seemed to be a common purpose to face the challenges together, not through conflict.

Holyoke Community College has been able to maintain a reserve of \$12.4 million. The vice president for finance and administration was vocal that this only represents three months of operating expenses, and that there are no plans to touch the reserve. With stocks performing well, it would be a lost opportunity cost. In the past the reserve would be tapped to support special projects.

Tuition is \$24 per credit. There is also an Educational Service Fee, Distance Learning Fee and Student Service fee in addition to a number of required course fees. Fees have been rising at 5.5 percent per year. The Student Senate participates in discussing fee increases. This past year the Senate asked that fees be increased by \$1, with the additional funds designated for mental health services.

Enrollment decline has been dramatic—34 percent down in headcount and 39 percent in FTE. An increase in Latinx students is expected to stabilize enrollment through 2030 at 4,817. Given the COVID-19 environment has upended enrollment across higher education, it's not clear that that assumption may still hold true. An enrollment management plan to address declining

enrollment combined with rightsizing staffing may help mitigate the negative factors the college faces. However, there has been serious efforts to implement the plan.

The College has an operating budget of \$54 million. State appropriations have been relatively flat over the past ten years, from 49 percent to 47 percent while tuition and fees have increased from 44 percent to 48 percent.

HCC's financial statements are audited by O'Connor & Drew P.C. There have been no substantive audit findings.

COVID-19 resulted in considerable expenses to the College at \$1.3 million. This was offset by CARES Act funds. As noted in the Data First forms, the potential for negative cash flow could be impacted by declining enrollment, decreasing state appropriation and no further federal relief funds.

The dean of resource development reports that the grants office brought in ~~at~~ \$9 million in new grants last year. Notable grants include a Title III grant that included professional development for the Center for Excellence. The goal is to support programmatic goals that the college can operationalize, which has been done in the Foundations of Health program.

The HCC Foundation has \$18 million in net assets. According to the vice president for institutional advancement, the Foundation disburses approximately \$200 thousand in scholarships to HCC students annually. The Foundation was able to secure a large donation of \$7.5 million to support the Marieb renovation. With COVID-19, the Foundation recognizes barriers have escalated and is focusing efforts on supporting students.

The College decided to not drop students for non-payment as one mechanism for addressing equity. The College is reviewing the benefit of increased enrollment and elimination of registration holds versus increased accounts receivable and bad debt. The comptroller estimates a 47 percent increase in accounts receivable for spring from \$512 thousand to \$753 thousand. Given COVID-19's impact, the effectiveness of this policy is unclear. Numbers for fall semester are not yet available.

The vice president for business and community services indicates his department's role is to increase enrollment by bringing to the College adult learners who may not have considered higher education. These efforts also help the College's equity efforts.

The College currently has debt of \$9.5 million with appropriate monthly payments being made.

The budget process has been open and inclusive. A Budget and Advisory Committee has been formed that includes non-finance employees. Faculty members at the sustainability meeting spoke of feeling well-informed about the state of the College's budget with ample opportunity for input. Finance staff have started using Questica, which automates previously labor-intensive

budget tasks. The move from hybrid activity zero based budgeting to allocated human resources budget model may help with staff rightsizing efforts.

At the meeting with financial aid staff indicated the effectiveness of HCC's financial aid policy is met by an annual review of Commonwealth & federal standards and surveying students.

Holyoke Community College consists of four locations in Holyoke: the main campus, with seven buildings; the Center for Health Education; the MGM Culinary Arts Center; and the Picknelly Adult and Family Education Center. There are two additional locations in Ludlow and Ware.

HCC has been able to fund capital projects and deferred maintenance primarily from DCAMM, with additional funding from the Foundation and on occasion the college's reserve. Facilities and Finance staff have a solid understanding of the physical infrastructure's needs. There is a FY20-FY24 Capital Improvement Plan that indicates HCC's reserves will not be used during this period. HCC would benefit from having a Master Plan including more focused efforts on sustainability.

The 2018-2022 deferred maintenance plan totals \$6.5 million. Major renovations include the \$43.5 million Campus Center, which according to the director of facilities and engineering services was basically gutted. There is a multi-year renovation plan for the Marieb Life Sciences Building. The first-floor renovation has been completed; the additional phases cost \$58 million. The Foundation secured the largest private donation in its history, \$7.5 million, to support this effort. The roof on the gym in the Bartley Center for Athletics and Recreation was replaced at a cost of \$1.1 million. The current steam pipe issue at the Kitteridge Center, as outlined in the On-Site Visit Supplemental Report, is anticipated to cost up to \$250 thousand and will be covered by deferred maintenance funds.

The eight library staff includes three reference librarians supplemented by Work-Study students. The library works closely with IT, but is responsible for loaning technology (Chromebooks, laptops, hotspots). Staff at several Zoom meetings said that student technology needs are being met through loaner items, and to date there is no unmet student need. The physical library was renovated in 2018 and has enough workstations and labs for on-ground learning. Library staff felt student access has improved since pivoting to online learning, and students are reaching out through more modalities than on-campus visits. Circulation of physical items had been decreasing pre-COVID-19, but reference & technology requests are increasing. Library staff have promoted information literacy on line and virtually. The library co-founded the Higher Education Libraries of Massachusetts to share academic resources among other academic libraries. Although the materials budget has declined from \$97 thousand in 2018 it is projected to remain at \$81 thousand for FY21 and FY22.

The on-site visit included a tour of the MGM Culinary Arts Institute, which opened in 2015. This leased facility was bright and inviting and will have students resume on-ground classes October 28th. The Center for Health Education also has state of the art technology with health students resuming their on-ground classes this semester. The tour of the main campus encompassed

the Campus Center, which opened in 2018, the Kittredge Center, Fine and Performing Arts, Donahue, the Library and Frost. Teaching spaces visited on the tour were replete with state-of-the-art technology as well as being well marked for social distancing in the COVID-19 environment.

During several meetings, faculty and staff went out of their way to praise IT and Instructional Technology. Many said the pivot to online learning was seamless thanks in large part to IT having infrastructure in place to support faculty, staff and students. IT purchased a Zoom license to promote online meetings; installed Jabber so staff calling from home could come from college phone number; created online student service forms, procured loaner technology, and provided training opportunities and support for faculty, staff and students.

IT supports over 70 software products as well as Banner, CRM Recruit, Moodle and other stand-alone products. The Software Applications Project Road Map with 72 projects, to align IT with the critical functions of the college. The Road Map was updated in 2020 with a consultant. In 2015 the college initiated a new CRM system, to streamline storage and collection of student information. In the replacement of technology IT has pivoted to laptops and docking stations to support remote work.

The College uses Moodle for its course management system. During the Zoom meeting on Instructional Technology and Digital Learning, staff reported there is an LMS committee reviewing Moodle's effectiveness. The Faculty Lounge in Moodle allows for both synchronous and asynchronous training.

The Unified mobile app is currently being rolled out with approximately 600 employee and students using it. The app will have portal access, authenticated apps for HCC information such as financial aid, grades and registration status as well as public apps for transportation, athletics and campus directory.

HCC has doubled its bandwidth to 10GB on campus and 1.5GB off campus. The campus has robust technology with 89 percent of classrooms meeting HCC's Classroom Technology Standard. There is a single sign-on with Active Directory.

HCC's IT Roadmap aligns to the strategic plan, with the department having a solid understanding of the needs of faculty, staff and students. IT previously used project managers in departments to identify technology needs and has done outreach sessions to respond to academic and administrative information technology needs.

HCC has a 2018 Disaster Plan. Security has been maintained, but risk management is acknowledged as an area that needs attention. Technology policies could be more readily available.

Given the demands on IT in the remote environment, staffing is a concern. According to the Self-Study, staffing is at 60 percent. Collective bargaining salaries are significantly lower than

the private sector making it very challenging to attract talent. Tight staffing in IT may impact daily operations and the ability of the college to meet the many projects currently being assigned to the department.

8. Educational Effectiveness

The focus of Holyoke Community College is the success of its students. The College's definition of student success is outlined in the strategic plan metrics and activities. HCC's Office of Institutional Research has a robust collection of data and reporting, including the distribution of Data Notes.

A review of syllabi in the course catalogue and website indicated that each course does address expectations for student learning. However, variation in terminology was used in the course syllabi to outline the student learning outcomes (student learning outcomes, course outcomes, course objectives, learning outcomes and objectives). Although syllabi were not standardized across the college, all syllabi sampled had a course description and included methods for assessing the courses, which included, quizzes and exams, assignments, projects, papers, presentations, and other demonstration competencies.

As evidenced in the Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators (E-series), the College has listed and published learning outcomes for most programs. Chemistry, Forensic Science, and Physics reported no learning outcomes for the program in the E-series, however, upon review of the course catalog on the College's website, program outcomes were included in the program information. No institutional level learning outcomes were documented in the E-series forms.

Assessment: Academic programs undergo a program review every five (5) years. During the past year, the college implemented Tableau which provided access of program level data to department chairs. Prior to Tableau, the Office of Institutional Research was responsible for program review data. An evaluation of academic program reviews revealed minimal to no assessment of course or program student learning outcomes (SLO). The program reviews sampled did include enrollment, retention, completion, transfer, licensure passage data and employment information as it related to the program cohort and analysis of special populations within the program. Many programs such as the Early Childhood Education review in 2017 included a mapping of HCC General Education Outcomes to program student learning outcomes at the course level and identified where the SLO is introduced, reinforced or expected competency. However, no data collection, use or reporting of the SLO at the course level was evidenced in the program reviews sampled.

The College has six programs accredited externally and each program uses the respective accreditor's standards for measuring achievement and assessment to maintain accreditation. These programs are: Culinary Arts (American Culinary Federation), Music (National Association

of Schools of Music), Nursing (Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing), Practical Nursing (Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing), Radiological Technology (Joint Review Committee on Radiological Education) and Veterinary Technician (Committee in Veterinary Technician Education and Activities).

The College has a General Education Assessment Committee (GEAC) consisting of six faculty members. The GEAC was responsible for the implementation of five general education outcomes (Effective Communication, Quantitative Reasoning, Information Literacy, Knowledge of Diversity and Critical Thinking) in spring 2007. Between 2010 and 2016, each outcome was assessed. This included a detailed process of collection through student artifacts, analysis (in some cases using inter-rater reliability) and reporting-out of data with recommendations that resulted in actions. An example was a finding from the Knowledge of Diversity outcome. The college is currently certifying courses that meet the criteria of Knowledge in Diversity.

Although the GEAC committee is still active, the assessment of the five outcomes has not progressed at the program or institutional level. Several challenges were discussed during the visit, such as the added load to faculty, time management to complete the task and professional development needs. However, overwhelming consensus was the lack of “assessment culture” at HCC and lack of emphasis from College leadership to promote the assessment of learning outcomes. Examples of this include: 1) the lack of inclusion of student learning assessment in the institutional strategic plan, 2) the accounting program review in 2015 stated “Although Department faculty members clearly understand the importance of addressing general education goals and have identified and routinely updated courses wherein the competencies are being addressed, a system-wide culture of assessing the student learning associated with these goals has yet to be established,” further along in the report it states “Given a lack of systematic commitment to learning outcomes assessment, assumptions of student learning tend to be largely inferential” and 3) in the biology review it stated “At this time the Biology Department does not have any program-specific assessment of learning outcomes.” Although the program noted the lack of assessment, no reference was made in the review’s strength/weakness section to document the need to address assessment.

Despite the lack of “assessment culture” noted at the College, HCC does appear to have the elements needed to successfully implement assessment of student learning. It has a rigorous academic review process, an Institutional Research Office that is fully-staffed, and a committee (GEAC) that is committed, knowledgeable and experienced in assessment of student learning outcomes.

Retention and Graduation Rates: The College primarily uses IPEDS and Voluntary Framework of Accountability (VFA) reporting to compare itself to peer institutes. In Fall 2019, a total of 4,335 students were degree-seeking at Holyoke Community College. Of that 4,335, 25 percent were first time to Holyoke Community College students. Considering the percentage of students that are first time to the college, the use of the IPEDS and VFA are beneficial.

Student retention (first-time cohort) rate has remained relatively flat with a high of 56 percent retention for the fall 2011 cohort to a low of 49 percent in fall 2015 (median between 2009 and 2018 was 53 percent). Fall 2018 retention was 53 percent. In fall 2018, college's first-time full-time retention rate was reported to be 3 percent higher than the national average for the fall 2018 cohort (HCC 58 percent retention).

Initiatives targeting special populations and cohorts such as, the Center for Academic Program Support, multi-cultural academic services, STRIVE (federally funded TRiO program), New Directions, Pathways, Foundation of Health and students who have documented disabilities, have been credited with maintaining the institutional retention.

HCC demonstrated a capacity to disaggregate its retention, graduation and transfer data by student demographics and modality. This was evidenced in the data first forms, self-study narrative, academic program reviews and HCC Data Notes.

The College continues to struggle with an achievement gap. During the last 10-year accreditation process, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education in 2011 recommended that the College give emphasis to "achieving its goals to improve retention and persistence to graduation for students of color. "

In fall 2018, the College noted a 15 percent achievement gap in retention between first-time degree-seeking white and Hispanic students (fall 2018 reports 60 percent retention for white students and 45 percent Hispanic students). This was a decrease in achievement gap of 2 percent from fall 2017 when the achievement gap had been its highest (17 percent) since fall 2009 (22 percent). Between fall 2010 and fall 2016, the gap ranged from 9 percent (fall 2010) to 15 percent in (fall 2015). The College notes that the achievement gap is wider for HCC than the Massachusetts community college segment with HCC's success rates falling below by 10 percentage points in timely completion of gateway courses, six percentage points in on-time credit accumulation and by four percentage points in retention after first year.

Completion rates (150 percent) have shown a 2 percent increase between Fall 2012 cohort (16 percent) and fall 2016 cohort (18 percent) for all first-time students. The achievement gap between white and minority students decreased by 1 percent point between the 2012 and 2016 cohort.

To address the achievement gap between white and minority students, the College is leveraging its strategic plan. Strategic plan strategy #2 Equity, Inclusion, and Student Success metrics support the increase of retention and decrease of achievement gaps. A sample of the activities the College has undertaken to support narrowing the achievement gap include HCC's partnership with the Center for Urban Education at USC, Bridgewater State University's Racial Equity and Justice Institute and the implementation of a predictive analytics model in fall 2020. The predictive analytics model is supported through a Lumina Foundation grant to identify students of color needing specialized advising.

Other Measures of Student Success: HCC conducts both external surveys (Wisconsin Hope Center and Community College Survey of Student Engagement or CCSSEE) and internal surveys (graduate, alumni, first-year out, academic and non-academic) to gauge student experiences and outcome.

Employment data is collected from the graduate survey. The 2019 graduate survey to collect placement and transfer data. Employment upon graduation has ranged from 81 percent in 2015 to 71 percent in 2019, employment and /or academically enrolled has ranged from 93 percent in 2015 to 90 percent in 2019. The report does include employer names but does not collect wage information to determine if HCC graduate wage data is consistent with state labor market wages.

In addition to using data in the academic review, the college did demonstrate using its data to inform and improve services. An example is the use of the CCSSE data. CCSSE data assisted HCC to change focus of services at the Thrive Center from financial education to helping students meet basic needs insecurity such as homelessness, housing insecurity and food security.

9. Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure

At the heart of matters of integrity is, according to one administrator, a student-centered approach that is openly discussed. They spoke to the importance of a truly student-centered approach where even when a student was give wrong advice by an agent of the College the institution must ensure that that student should not be penalized. Staff report that the opportunity to “come to the table” to discuss issues of honesty and integrity are available to everyone. Students were equally enthusiastic about being “allowed a voice” at HCC. In the words of one student “HCC gave me dignity, (the proper) mindset, connections, and tools to succeed”.

Academic integrity is embedded in policy. “Holyoke Community College is committed to academic integrity—the honest, authentic and independent pursuit of knowledge. As members of the academic community, students are expected to be responsible for all of their own academic work without dishonesty or deception; joint work is legitimate only when assigned or approved by the instructor. HCC faculty members will take reasonable precautions to eliminate opportunities for academic dishonesty.” The catalog and student handbook go on to codify student rights and responsibilities including Student privacy rights (FERPA). The College acknowledges in their self-study that they need to pay more attention to training faculty and staff about FERPA regulations.

Diversity was a recurring theme in the interviews and forums. Staff reported in interviews that diversity at HCC includes, not only race, but abilities and diverse “paths of life”. The student

senate was proud of the diversity and inclusiveness of the college. Administration noted it as an important goal for staff and faculty hiring.

The College has implemented hiring guidelines that seek to attract and hire a qualified, diverse workforce. The self-study states that “The administration has supported the HCC Affirmative Action requirement that interviews be offered to applicants from underrepresented groups who meet the required qualifications.” HCC’s Affirmative Action officer, along with the director of HR oversee and train all search committee members on fairness and the importance of diversity.

The recent addition of an Ombudsperson, thought by that person to be the only one at a community college in Massachusetts, was pointed out as evidence of the integrity of the institution. Community members can talk to the ombudsperson confidentially about how to handle their concerns.

Periodic assessment of policies was not in evidence.

HCC’s catalog and website clearly show its mission, objectives, and educational outcomes. It also clearly articulates policies for *admissions, transfer, student fees and charges, charges and refund policies; rules and regulations for student conduct; procedures for student appeals and complaints; other items related to attending or withdrawing from the institution; academic programs, courses currently offered.* The HCC website also includes a section on its status with NECHE, its current evaluation, and how to address concerns to the Commission. The Marketing and Communications Department oversees College publications including the website and catalog which are updated annually.

In an open forum with students they reported that the website “helps a lot”. Information was readily accessible. They pointed out that very helpful to them was the “Week-at-a-Glance” that comes out every Monday and includes links to many parts of the website and updated information. They also reported that efforts were being made to help “Adult Learners” who may not be as comfortable navigating digital information.

Staff reported that the College sends a lot of information to the community. Having it all encompassed in one self-study was, in the words of one staff member, a model of transparency.

Contact information is available on every page of the website, however attempts to ask a question through the Chat feature on HCC’s website were unsuccessful.

A sampling comparison of catalog and web content uncovered no inconsistencies.

Archived past issues of College catalogs are available on the website.

The College catalog contains a list of its continuing faculty, indicating departmental or program affiliation, showing degrees held and the institutions granting them as well as the names and

positions of administrative officers. The names of governing board members are included on the website but not their principal affiliations.

Each academic department lists goals for its students in terms of program outcomes on their website along with retention and graduation rates. In some cases, like nursing, certification exam rates are also included. Total cost of education and net price calculator are available on the website and show all applicable tuition and fees.

Affirmation of Compliance: To document the institution's compliance with Federal regulations relating to Title IV, the team reviewed Holyoke Community College's Affirmation of Compliance form signed by the CEO. As noted in this report, the College publicly discloses on its website and other relevant publications its policy on transfer of credit along with a list of institutions with which it has articulation agreements. Public notification of the evaluation visit and of the opportunity for public comment was made by the College one month prior to the visit in *The Reminder*, the *Daily Hampshire Gazette*, the *MassLive*, the *Holyoke Sun* and on the College's website. Copies of the College's grievance procedures for faculty, staff and students are distributed annually during orientation and welcome-back sessions held at the start of both the fall and spring semesters. For its online programs and courses, the College uses a system of secure logins and pedagogical approaches to verify students' identities to ensure the integrity of the programs. As discussed in Standard 4: The Academic Program, the team's review of course schedules and syllabi for a cross-section of the College's course offerings, both classroom and online, as well as courses offered in a condensed weekend or intersession/summer format, found the assignment of credit reflective of the College's policy and consistent with the Commission's standards.

Summary

Holyoke Community College used the self-study process to review major aspects of the College's functioning and efforts in meeting the Commission Standards. Data First and E-series forms were included in the process. Overall, it appears that the self-study process was helpful to the College in appraising strengths and weaknesses, and in making projections of future College actions and undertakings that will lead to improvements. The visiting team found the self-study to be substantially accurate and candid.

The visiting team found the College to be a well-led organization with an involved and knowledgeable Board of Trustees, and an effective and capable president. After taking office 2017, the president has led a number of new initiatives, with the most important being the design of a strategic plan. The plan was put together with broad involvement by all of the College constituencies and seems to have energized the College community.

At all levels in the organization the team found dedicated, qualified and well-credentialed faculty and staff. Those individuals are strongly committed to serving students and accomplishing the mission of the College.

The College has experienced ten years of enrollment declines. Over that period of time, the College has lost 34 percent of its student headcount and 39 percent of full-time equivalent students. That enrollment decline combined with uncertain state appropriations makes the institution's financial future difficult. To its credit the College has reduced and combined academic programs. The College has, however, not made the kind of structural changes to its budget that are needed.

Assessment of student learning, administrative processes, and College policies and procedures is lagging. While there have been some efforts in the assessment area, those efforts have been scattered, and there is little evidence that they have led to improvements.

The president and the leadership of the College appear to be well aware of the challenges they face. The current pandemic will not make things easier. Enrollment is declining even more, finances will be more strained, and it will be increasingly difficult to focus people's attention on things like assessment. With all of this in mind, it is the genuine hope of the visiting team that the following summary of the most salient strengths and concerns will be helpful in meeting an uncertain future.

Strengths

- The full-time faculty are exceptionally well-prepared with all of them having a master's degrees and an impressive 31 percent having doctoral degrees. The part-time faculty are also well-prepared with 93 holding at least a master's degree and 12 percent holding doctoral degrees.
- The College carries an impressive \$12.4 million in financial reserves. The Board of Trustees has appropriate policies in place to husband these reserves. The reserve fund is available to provide stability during financially difficult times such as these. The College has also used the reserves to leverage external sources of revenue.
- Utilizing external consultants, the College has engaged in a long-term process based on both need and enrollment to evaluate academic programs. This evaluation has led to the merger and elimination of many programs. Over the past 10 years a total of 26 programs have been eliminated and many programs have been merged. Overall, this process has saved the institution money and at the same time strengthen and better focused the academic offerings.
- Under the leadership of the current president in January 2017 the College embarked on a comprehensive strategic planning process. While there has been planning cycled prior to this new process, those cycles did not manifest themselves into a comprehensive plan. The new planning process involved the College community and produced a plan

with nine objectives and 21 measurable outcomes. The plan has truly become a guiding document that is part of the daily activities and culture of the College.

- In the past the College's Information Technology Department was thought to be not meeting the College's needs. Recent changes in the Department have led to significant improvement overall. Many faculty report that the College's ability to move quickly and effectively to an on-line environment was in no small measure due to talents and hard work of this Department.
- The College's Interactive Learning programs to include learning communities, honors, experiential learning, and service learning have been instrumental in improving retention and completion rates of students who participate in those programs.

Concerns

- Overall, the College lacks a culture of assessment and continuous improvement. While there are pockets in which assessment efforts can be found, those are few and far between. Certainly, there has been serious work to assess the effectiveness of general education at the College level there is no evidence to suggest that those efforts have led to improvement in the academic program. With the exception of some programs that carry external accreditation, assessment of student learning at the program and course levels is not evident. Assessment of the effectiveness of non-academic areas such as student services and learning resources has not seriously begun. The College's policies and procedures have not as yet been subjected to an assessment process. The Board of Trustees has not begun efforts to assess their effectiveness.
- Since 2010 the College's headcount enrollment has dropped by 34 percent and its full-time equivalent enrollment is down by 39 percent. At the same time the College's expenses have continued to increase (up 18 percent since 2016). With the exception of some positions eliminated as individuals retired, the College's employee base has remained relatively constant. The financial strain is becoming increasingly evident. There is some indication that the College recognizes the need to reduce expenditures. Correspondingly, the College has laid plans to reverse the enrollment decline, but the implementation of those plans lacks a sense of urgency.
- The College's internal governance structure is in need of a major review. Among the comments made were that their governance committees that no longer meet, *ad hoc* committees have developed outside of the governance process, there is no College-wide assessment committee, many staff members and non-unionized individuals are left out of the governance process. While not all criticisms of the governance structure may be valid, the legitimacy of shared governance would be enhanced by a comprehensive review.
- While the College's efforts to narrow the gap between the diversity of its student body and the diversity of its faculty (especially with regard to Latinx faculty), and the College's efforts to narrow the gap between the success rates of minority students and White students are to be applauded, the fact remains that both of those gaps are substantial

and have not significantly moved over the past few years. The College needs to continue to focus on these issues, especially since anticipated declining resources will add to the challenges.



VIRTUAL VISIT ON-SITE VISIT SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT

INSTITUTION:	Holyoke Community College
VISIT TYPE:	Self-Study/Comprehensive Evaluation
DATE OF VIRTUAL VISIT:	October 4-7,2020
DATE OF ON-SITE VISIT:	October 6, 2020
EVALUATOR(S):	Charles Cleary

ON-SITE REPORT:

The team member visited three locations:

HCC/MGM Culinary Arts Center
164 Race Street
Holyoke, MA 01040

Center for Health Education
404 Jarvis Avenue
Holyoke, MA 01040

Holyoke Community College (main campus)
303 Homestead Avenue
Holyoke, MA 01040

The on-site visit started at the MGM Culinary Arts Center, an up and coming section of town. The facility is well signed and has large glass storefront windows, allowing passersby views of the facility & culinary classrooms. The facility is bright, modern and state of the art.

A food truck was outside with several patrons, and staff explained it was an alumna of the program celebrating her food truck's opening. The tour of the facility was conducted by the following HCC employees:

Stacy Graves, Coordinator, HCC MGM Arts Institute & PAFEC
Kristine Ricker Choleva, Director of Planning Curriculum & Assessment
Rachel Rubinstein, Vice President for Academic & Student Affairs

Our temperatures were taken and we were required to wash our hands before entering the facility. Signs regarding social distancing were prevalent and all spaces had furniture distanced. The first floor consists of a state-of-the-art pastry kitchen, culinary classroom with screens allowing all students to

see the teacher/chef in action and a second culinary classroom where each student has their own stove & sink. On-ground socially distanced classes of six students are scheduled to start October 28th. There is social space, a kitchen and a hotel lab on the second floor. Credit and non-credit may use the same shared spaces and faculty may teach in both areas. Assistive technology is available for students with disabilities. The second floor also has office space and a computer lab. The computer lab has been used for ServSafe certifications, which currently do not allow online certification.

The tour continued at the Center for Health Education. This tour was conducted by the following HCC employees:

Clare Lamontagne, Dean of Health Sciences
Kristine Ricker Choleva, Director of Planning Curriculum & Assessment
Rachel Rubinstein, Vice President for Academic & Student Affairs
Michelle Sherlin, Simulation Coordinator

Temperatures were not taken nor was hand-washing required at entry. The Dean of Health Services explained that the door to the facility is kept locked, and faculty only open it when classes are in session. Students have faculty phone numbers and call or text if running late. There were two classes in session. All students and instructors were social distancing and wearing masks. The building has a one-way flow of traffic, with employees, guests and students entering the main entrance and leaving by the rear door.

The following classes are taught at the Center for Health Education: Radiologic Technology, Nursing, CNA, Medical Assistant and Community Health Worker.

The first floor has an impressive array of state-of-the-art medical technology and labs. The Radiology Tech Room has the ability to broadcast to all rooms. This has been especially useful post-COVID-19. There are viewing rooms which allow faculty to watch students make decisions. There are computers on wheels, a home care simulation room and a birthing simulator. The Center also works with Bay Path's Physician's Assistant program. The second floor contains faculty offices, which are spacious modern and bright, as well as two skilled labs.

The tour resumed on the main campus and was conducted by the following HCC employees:

Daniel Campbell, Director of Facilities & Engineering
Kristine Ricker Choleva, Director of Planning Curriculum & Assessment
Rachel Rubinstein, Vice President for Academic & Student Affairs
Narayan Sampath, Vice President, Administration & Finance

There are currently no on-ground classes at the main campus.

The tour started in the recently renovated Campus Center. The Campus Center has a large parking lot and faces the athletic fields. To enter the building one must cross a walkway over a brook with plants and flowers, presenting a pleasing exterior. This appears to be the heart of the campus. However, the current traffic flow and bus stop result in the impression that this is the back of the campus. There is a current study to move the bus stop to the Campus Center, which was designed for the bus stop and redesign traffic flow to this entrance. Admissions and Advising are located inside the main entrance.

The tour included a stop in one of the mechanical rooms. Outside the Campus Center was a large hole with an exposed pipe. The Director of Facilities explained that the steam pipe provides heat to the Center. Repair costs are estimated between \$150 thousand and \$250 thousand, which will impact deferred maintenance plans. The Vice President for Finance & Administration indicated that the State will reimburse the college from capital project funds from another project. Given that it is early October, the need for heat to the building and preventing pipes from freezing makes this an urgent repair.

The college currently is a location for free COVID-19 tests. In addition, the State has asked the college to host public hearings regarding the Holyoke Soldiers' Home. Although the main campus has a 300-seat theater and large conference rooms, finding a large socially distance space is challenging. Staff noted that these were just two instances of the community wanting to use the renovated campus facility. The conference room and theater are spacious and welcoming, with expansive views of the athletic fields from the conference room.

The tour moved to the Donahue Building, which contains the College's radio station and The Bunker, a large area dedicated for service member academic and social use. Aramark, the college's food vendor, is renovation space for a SNAP/EBT store.

Staff were very proud of the Center for Excellence. The renovated space had been used by faculty & staff extensively pre-COVID-19. The Center has since gone virtual. The physical space is stylish, with student artwork covering the walls and inviting atmosphere.

The tour moved to the library. The library has reduced hours and limited study space for students. The upper floors have been blocked off. Although not as modern as some of the spaces seen on the tour, the library was neat, clean and inviting with plenty of space for students to study.

The tour concluded at Frost, one of the older buildings on campus. Frost contains most of the administrative offices. It was clear that student and academic spaces have been given preference for upgrades.

The two off-site locations offer students state of the art experiences in culinary and health education. The Campus Center provides an impressive entrance to the campus. The current steam pipe issue is being addressed, but the funding does not appear to be pinned down for such a large expense and may impact other deferred maintenance projects. The older spaces were typical of most community colleges – adequate, but in need of updating. All in all, the physical infrastructure presents students with a welcoming environment and state of the art equipment.