

Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students

of

AMHERST COLLEGE
Amherst, Massachusetts

by

An Evaluation Team representing the
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
of the
New England Association of Schools and Colleges

Prepared after study of the institution's
self-evaluation report and a visit to
the campus March 2-5, 2008

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This report represents the views of the evaluation team as interpreted by the Chair. It goes directly to the institution before being considered by the Commission. It is a confidential document prepared as an educational service for the benefit of the institution. All comments in the report are made in good faith, in an effort to assist Amherst College. They are based solely on an educational evaluation of the institution, and of the manner in which it appears to be carrying out its educational objectives.

COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION
New England Association of Schools and College
Preface Page

Date form completed: February 8, 2008

Name of Institution: Amherst College

1. **History** Year chartered or authorized 1825 Year first degrees awarded 1822
2. **Type of control:** State City Other; specify: _____
 Private, not-for-profit Religious Group; specify: _____
 Proprietary Other; specify: _____

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

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

	Full-time	Part-time	FTE	Retention ^a	Graduation ^b	# Degrees ^c
Associate						
Baccalaureate	1,683			98%	96%	409
Graduate						

(a) full-time 1st to 2nd year (b) 3 or 6 year graduation rate (c) no. of degrees awarded most recent year

5. **Number of current faculty:** Full time 194 Part-time 18 FTE: 200

6. **Current fund data for most recently completed fiscal year:** (Specify year: 2007)
(Double click in any cell to enter spreadsheet. Enter dollars in millions; e.g., \$1,456,200 = \$1.456)

Revenues		Expenditures	
Tuition	\$32.687	Instruction	\$35.196
Gov't Appropriations	\$0.000	Research	\$3.505
Gifts/Grants/Endowment	\$71.129	General*	\$48.343
Auxiliary Enterprises	\$14.480	Auxiliary Enterprises	\$27.201
Other	\$4.794	Other	\$3.419
Total	\$123.090	Total	\$117.664

* includes academic support, student services and institutional support

7. **Number of off-campus locations:**
In-state _____ Other U.S. _____ International _____ Total 0

8. **Number of degrees and certificates offered electronically:**
Programs offered entirely on-line 0 Programs offered 50-99% on-line 0

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

10. **Accreditation history:**
Candidacy: None Initial accreditation: 1929 Last comprehensive evaluation: Spring 1998
Last Commission action: Fifth-year interim report accepted Date: March 7, 2003

11. **Other characteristics:**
The Mead Art Museum is accredited by the American Association of Museums (decennial review 2007-08).

Introduction

In November 2007, the Chair of the Evaluation Team made an initial visit to the Amherst campus for the purpose of planning the team visit and identifying issues that would help structure the scheduling of meetings between team members and Amherst constituencies. All preparations for the team visit were executed exquisitely by the Amherst staff.

Upon their arrival on March 2, 2008, members of the Evaluation Team were welcomed warmly and offered every assistance for facilitating a productive visit process. The visit began with a dinner hosted by Amherst's president, Board members and 42 prominent members of the community. On the following day, meetings were conducted with representatives and leaders from across the campus community including faculty, students, administration, staff and Trustees. Separate meetings were held with the chair of the Board and the Trustee who chairs the Board's Instruction Committee. Overall, team members met with approximately 60 members of the administration, faculty, staff and students, including those serving on all major governing committees. Open meetings were held for faculty, staff and students. All the individuals with whom the team met were well aware of the self-study process and the report. Each responded to questions posed by the team with candor and with commitment to a constructive process.

The Self-Study Report and other materials provided to the team – including past accreditation documents, institution-wide and area-specific Strategic Plans, Catalogue, View Book and Audited Financial Reports, as well as an extensive array of internal reports, and documentation of deliberations – represented as a totality an extraordinarily comprehensive and accurate description of the current state and planned future directions of the College. Review of these materials, the chair's preliminary visit and the team's intensive three-day visit together provided the basis for the information and evaluative judgments contained in this report, which addresses the standards for accreditation of The Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

This evaluation of Amherst College is a comprehensive evaluation following the College's fifth-year report submitted and accepted in 2003.

1. Mission and Purposes

In 2003, the Amherst faculty passed a draft mission statement as part of its effort to comply with the 1998 recommendation of the NEASC accreditation assessment. The 2003 draft mission statement appears in the Fifth Year Interim report presented to NEASC on January 15, 2003. Subsequently, this draft was not ratified by the Board of Trustees and thus the College began the process of writing a mission statement from scratch. Every effort was made to include various constituents of the campus community, including the Student Senate, the staff Advisory Committee on Personnel Policies, the Executive Committee of the Alumni Association, and the faculty through the Committee of Six and via faculty meetings. Perhaps most notably, the statement was discussed by the full Board of Trustees in at least four separate meetings. The result is a new mission statement,

passed last year by both the faculty and Board. It is instructive to compare it with the 2003 statement, which focused somewhat narrowly on classroom instruction and “outstanding support to a faculty engaged in teaching and research.” In contrast, the new mission statement emphasizes helping students to “lead principled lives of consequence.” Emphasis is clearly on the values and skills students need to learn in order to be productive and critical citizens. The important changes between the two statements reflect less a fundamental change in mission than a change in the perception of the Amherst community about the value of having a mission statement and the role one can play in helping the College to further its goals for student learning. Meetings with members of the student body, faculty, Board, and administrative staff revealed the unusual degree to which the campus community embraces the shared vision of a small, residential, undergraduate liberal arts college environment, and privileges the academic program over a nonetheless vibrant and engaged extracurricular life. The devotion to undergraduate learning is a value that is unanimously shared. On the other hand, there is almost universal recognition that Amherst’s mission is an evolving one, as each generation attempts to define residential undergraduate liberal arts learning in a way that is relevant to the society in which these students are about to enter.

2. Planning and Evaluation

Over the past ten years, Amherst College has undertaken a wide range of planning initiatives across the institution. These efforts include a comprehensive study of the curriculum that began in 2002 with the work of the Special Committee on the Amherst Education and culminated in the report of the Committee on Academic Priorities in 2006. Other major planning initiatives include planning in Admission and Financial Aid to increase the diversity of the student body and facilities planning for both Residential Life and the Academic Program.

The Amherst community is very much involved in the planning processes. The faculty participates in 21 standing committees and five ad hoc committees. Some committees are linked directly to administrative offices, for example the Faculty Committee on Admission and Financial Aid works closely with the Office of Admission and Financial Aid. The Residential Master Plan Committee included and the Academic Facilities Planning Committee includes faculty, staff and students. The Committee on Academic Priorities included administrators, faculty, staff and students, consulted regularly with the Trustees and held numerous public meetings. The minutes of committee meetings and major committee reports are published on the College’s Web site.

Planning: Amherst initiated a central Office of Institutional Research and Planning in 2004. The purpose of the office, in addition to overseeing survey research, is to gather data to help make informed policy decisions, provide some of the data necessary for planning and assist with the evaluation of strategic initiatives.

Evidence of priority setting within the planning process is clear. One important objective of the College has been to increase the diversity of the student body. To achieve this goal,

new resources have been allocated to recruitment efforts and to the additional financial aid required. At the same time, additional academic resources have been allotted to support the curricular and co-curricular lives of the students admitted. A second objective has been to expand slowly the student body while adding faculty, both to maintain the student/teacher ratio and to respond to the academic priorities established by the Committee on Academic Priorities. A third objective has been to improve the student residence halls for all students. A carefully planned program of renovation and construction with necessary funding will permit achievement of that goal by the end of the decade. Those objectives are all works in progress, but there has been measurable success on all three.

Evaluation: The College undertook a community-wide debate about its values and aspirations leading to a redefinition of its mission statement in 2007. The new mission statement provides a succinct statement of the strategic direction of the institution. The College has also put in place new mechanisms for assessment. For example, since its last self-study and accreditation review, Amherst has supplemented annual surveys with program assessment for smaller initiatives (e.g., the summer science program, first-year seminars, advising and the Phoenix program for students in introductory chemistry) and has joined the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the survey of untenured faculty satisfaction made by the Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE). The Special Committee on the Amherst Education (SCAE) was created and charged with reviewing all aspects of the academic program. SCAE methodology included comparative assessment of best practices at peer institutions, review of student survey data, and intensive consultation with a broad cross-section of the campus community. An Office of Institutional Research and Planning was created at the recommendation of the SCAE in 2003. In 2004, a comprehensive planning group, the Committee on Academic Priorities (CAP), was created to extend the work of the SCAE.

Progress of the new academic plan is monitored as each recommendation is approved for funding and implemented. Most of the initiatives are so recent that evaluation is not possible and this should be a goal of the next review.

Throughout the planning process between 2002 and 2006, a great deal of internal information about the curriculum, across general education, departments and interdisciplinary programs, was collected and analyzed. New proposals for academic programs were solicited from across the College. Assessment of existing programs such as the library facilities, information technology, honors program, quantitative center and writing center was conducted. In 2002, the faculty revised the standards for awarding honors, raising the GPA bar and adding a requirement of departmental recommendation based on a thesis or comparable work, and implemented that change effective with the class of 2004. The information gathered will be useful as an archive as the implementation of the academic plan continues. However, because of the intensity of this internal analysis, the pace of evaluations of departments and programs by outside committees decreased.

Evaluation of student outcomes takes place primarily at the department and program level through capstone experiences, honors work and comprehensive examinations. The College will need to develop new metrics to evaluate the success of the new academic plan, particularly in language instruction, quantitative skills and writing.

Institutional Effectiveness: Amherst College is clearly engaged in planning for its future. There is an expectation that this work is the responsibility of the entire community and is driven by the democratic culture of the institution. In the past ten years the College has planned and is in the process of implementing major initiatives that will continue to enhance its stature in higher education.

3. Organization and Governance

The 2005 edition of the Bylaws of the Trustees of Amherst College clearly describes the function and responsibilities of the Board, including its officers and committees, as well as the roles of the President, Treasurer, and Comptroller. The organization of the faculty is clearly laid out in the Faculty Handbook, available online. Faculty committee assignments are also listed online. Many faculty committees have student representation. Student governance and organization are described in The Constitution of the Association of Amherst Students. Community members clearly understand their roles, as evidenced by committee reports and conversations with faculty, staff, and students. The shared governance structure is consistent with the aims of the College. Through their respective organizations and committees, students, faculty, staff, and Board all participate widely in the community to the extent that is appropriate for each constituency.

The Board's legal responsibility for the College is established in its 1825 Charter. The Board is sufficiently distinct from the faculty, students, and staff of the College. For example, currently the only employee of the College who is a Board Trustee is the College's President. No students or other faculty members are members of the Board. The Board is made up of committed individuals from various walks of life, including some who have had academic experience working on another college campus. Most members of the Board are alumni, including one-third of its members who are elected by the Alumni Association. Representation of the alumni on the Board is consistent with American liberal arts colleges. The Board has a written Conflict of Interest Policy available online that requires all individuals covered to complete and file a Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statement. In 2008 the Board adopted a Whistle Blower policy.

The vibrant discussion and participation by the Board in the creation of the Mission Statement is only the most recent major example of the Board's clear understanding of its role in the governance of the College and its sense of where and when it is appropriate to use its authority. The Board has an effective working relationship with the faculty, holding the latter accountable for substantive decision-making, encouraging it to have the will and to reach the level of consensus required to exercise that role.

The Board's four meetings per year, and an occasional summer retreat, establish communication opportunities among members. The Chair of the Board regularly talks

with the President about the details of faculty governance and student life, usually more than weekly during the semester term. Communication among them seems very effective.

The Board evaluates the performance of its president on an annual basis. Included in this review is a meeting between the Board and the faculty Committee of Six without the president or dean in attendance.

The President's primary administrative structure is the Senior Staff, which meets every Monday. There, deans and other unit heads collectively resolve issues facing the College and communicate across organizational lines about substantive items. Consultation by the president with the faculty is insured through the very effective, time-intensive meetings with the Committee of Six.

The Dean of the Faculty directly reports to the president (and indeed, they share an office suite), communicating throughout the day. The faculty is organized into many working committees, which faculty members take very seriously. Most prominent among them are the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) and the Committee of Six. The committee structure is truly a hallmark of Amherst's very effective shared governance system. In addition, attendance at faculty meetings (up to twice per month on Tuesday evenings) is required, and attendance often approaches 90% of faculty in residence. This impressive record of attendance – during an era in which faculty are under much pressure at home because of changing social mores – attests to the very strong loyalty faculty attach to the College and to shared governance.

The Board has delegated the development and management of the curriculum to the faculty. The Committee on Educational Policy (composed of five faculty, three students, and ad-hoc non-voting administrative staff including the dean and a recorder/researcher) is charged with supervising the curriculum and making recommendations to the administration about the allocation of faculty lines. A review of its minutes demonstrates that the committee is working effectively in managing a diverse and changing curriculum. Minutes of the meetings, describing discussions in great detail, are posted online, offering a transparent window into the workings of the committee. Likewise, the other major faculty committee, the Committee of Six, also posts its minutes online. The Committee of Six includes the dean and president, as non-voting members, in addition to six faculty elected at large. It serves both as a promotion and tenure committee as well as an executive committee. The concentration of activity of the Committee of Six – that is, so much work and responsibility lodged in one major committee – is a distinctive feature of Amherst faculty governance.

Students serve on most faculty committees. They are appointed by the Student Senate. The Board's Student Life Committee also has student representation. In keeping with this type of institution, but unusual more generally in American higher education, students also serve on faculty hiring committees, participating along with the faculty in interviews, research talks, and meals. Student opinion is taken into account in every major decision facing the College.

The Board undergoes periodic self-evaluation. The faculty continually asks itself about the array and structure of its committees, but a time is likely approaching when it would be useful to do so in a more reflective and perhaps formal manner. Amherst has so many faculty committees that there are simply more slots than faculty members in residence and many faculty must serve on more than one standing committee. Also, as the faculty becomes younger over the next several years as a result of retirements, fewer senior faculty will be available to serve on the Committee of Six. Although untenured faculty are permitted to serve, the College may need to address the challenge of increased workload for the Committee of Six, and yet, must do so in a way that doesn't erode the unusual faith that all members of the community currently have in its governance system.

4. The Academic Program

The Amherst Self-Study, meetings with faculty and students, and a wide range of empirical evidence document the extraordinary character and quality of liberal arts education at the College. A dedicated faculty is deeply committed to teaching – as well as to college governance and scholarship. Students find themselves challenged, excited and engaged by their courses and speak in glowing terms of their educational experiences. Academic credit is awarded with integrity. There is a great deal to be proud of at Amherst, and faculty, students, administrative staff and Trustees are understandably confident in the excellence of the College.

That confidence in excellence may in the past have contributed to some resistance to learning from peer institutions and to reexamining and altering practices and structures at the College that appear to many to be integral to the high quality of the academic program. For this and other reasons, Amherst “fell behind” other colleges on many fronts – for example, in supporting institutional research, developing interdisciplinary programs such as environmental studies, and engaging systematically in the teaching of writing.

The past six years, however, have been ones of extraordinary self-examination and learning from colleagues inside and outside the College. Much, but not all, of this reexamination of the educational experience of students has been prompted by the challenges of working with a more diverse study body in the context of changes in secondary education nationally. At the time of this review, this massive labor is just beginning to be translated into consequential institutional changes in the academic program. A faculty that had doubted its capacity to take action has demonstrated its ability to do so. It is crucial for the College that this developing momentum be sustained on the many issues that are and will be under deliberation. Doing so will require the Faculty to give priority to the goals they share for an institution to which they are deeply committed – even when that may mean imposing College expectations on some reluctant peers.

The 2003 Report of the Special Committee on the Amherst Education (SCAE) articulated a coherent set of goals, set an agenda and pioneered a consultative process with the faculty that provided a model for the later work of the Committee on Academic Priorities (CAP). That Report also highlighted the primary role of “individual departments [as] the primary

source of change” but concluded that “a more central role for the College as a whole is warranted” to deal with the issues of access to the curriculum and success in engaging it. The SCAE called for “strong institution-wide initiatives” with regard to writing and quantitative reasoning skills in particular, but also with regard to the arts, global comprehension and experiential education.

Although not reviewed formally by the Faculty at a time of presidential transition, the SCAE report was embraced by the Committee of Six which launched proposals to strengthen the role of the Committee on Educational Policy and to initiate working groups on writing, quantitative skills, visual understanding, global comprehension, and experiential education. This work in turn – thoroughly discussed by the faculty – helped to shape the January 2006 proposals of the Committee on Academic Priorities that have been broadly accepted by the faculty and provide a guide to allocation of new resources for the academic program and other College initiatives. Academic planning thus has moved far toward implementation and the Trustees and administration have in good faith already raised substantial funding to support achievement of these goals. Faculty success in moving forward the substantial agenda of academic program change – particularly implementation of a coherent ‘program’ of writing and quantitative skills instruction and supporting the success of a diverse student body – will pay important dividends on that Board investment in new resources.

The Open Curriculum: At Amherst the general education *expectation* (Catalogue, p.69) is indeed “coherent and substantive. It embodies the institution’s definition of an educated person and prepares students for the world in which they will live” (NEASC 4.15). That expectation – often unfamiliar to faculty advisors and students – has been complicated by new concerns over writing and quantitative and informational skills and needs rethinking and reformulation by CEP and the Faculty. A central challenge – noted in the 1998 review and in the 2008 Self-Study – remains translation of the expectations into patterns of student course-taking and learning in the context of an open curriculum to which the faculty is fiercely committed.

Transcript review for classes of 2002-06 suggests that there has been little or no progress toward greater breadth of course-taking by Amherst students since 1995-96.¹ Whereas, 63% of students a decade ago took math or computer science courses, only 56% did in 2002-06; the same pattern holds for lab science courses (60% vs. 44%) and creative arts (<50% vs. 42%). Even the percentages taking three or more courses in the humanities (99% vs. 88%) and social sciences (90% vs. 87%) declined. These patterns continue to be inconsistent with Amherst’s clear aspirations for breadth articulated in the Catalogue.

This issue was a central point of research and discussion in the extensive and impressive Report of the Special Committee on the Amherst Education in 2003. In addition, that report also emphasized the fundamental competencies of writing and quantitative analysis and both the challenge and importance of finding ways to assist students to undertake broad educations and build those skills in the context of that open curriculum. The CEP

¹ The data may not be entirely comparable, and are drawn from the 1998 NEASC Evaluation Report and the 2008 Amherst Self-Study.

currently is examining ways of establishing a clearer accounting of student progress toward achieving curricular breadth and anticipates a rethinking of the broader aspirations for a liberal education that have long been inscribed in the Catalogue.

A comprehensive review of pre-major advising appears also to be on the CEP agenda. Advising for first- and second-year students continues to be widely viewed as not fully successful in encouraging students to explore the curriculum as widely as the College hopes they will. We highlight the importance of moving forward in conjunction with review of expectations for general education.

At the same time, we acknowledge that real progress has been made in advising over the last several years. The Teagle Foundation Working Group on an Open Curriculum has developed a set of ‘best practices in advising’; discussions of advising are now part of faculty discussion through the Teaching and Advising Program; orientation for new advisors has been instituted; electronic resources for advisors and advisees are under development. As important, major and salutary changes were made in the structure of advising in the last two years based in part on data collected about students’ experiences. Instead of enrolling in all courses during the summer, students now select only their first-year seminar and then meet with a special group of advisors during orientation to select other courses. An on-going advisor is then assigned from among a student’s teachers (ideally) about four weeks into the semester. These innovations create their own challenges of discontinuity and may require fine-tuning or rethinking but reflect commitment to and action toward improving the pre-major advising that is essential to the success of the open curriculum.

Writing and Quantitative Skills: As a result of the CAP recommendations, the College is committing new resources to departments to ‘incentivize’ contributions to teaching both quantitative skills and intensive writing. These commitments recognize that the problems of uneven quantitative and writing skills must be “solved in our classrooms” in coordination with the Quantitative Center and Writing Center.

Both of these Centers were reviewed by visiting teams in 2005 and their reports have common themes. They see the Centers as important resources to support the curriculum, which bears the major responsibility for dealing with quantitative skills and writing development – and which must do so over four years. They also encourage the College to create comprehensive plans for addressing these challenges rather than relying on a series of ad hoc efforts by individual faculty. For example, the quantitative skills report urges Amherst “to be more proactive in promoting long term solutions,” and the writing report challenges the College to integrate the “teaching of writing ... throughout the curriculum.” The writing report goes on to note the impressive commitment of individual faculty to working with students to help them improve their writing and argues that the College “should capitalize on this commitment to develop a more comprehensive approach” with the Writing Center as one part. The same can clearly be said of quantitative skill development. For writing, in particular, the report emphasizes the importance of seeing writing “not merely as a ‘problem’ for some, but as an essential value for all.”

The substantially more varied educational backgrounds of Amherst students today provide a particular note of urgency to these institutional endeavors. The recently issued report of the Faculty Committee on Admission and Financial Aid² asserts that “On one point we all agree: ensuring that our students – all of our students – are well-served is of the utmost importance to the success of diversity at the College and to the continued success of the College itself.” Coherent, College-wide programs in support of writing and quantitative skills are fundamental to ensuring that success.

It is not at all clear that the additional faculty resources coming as a result of the CAP recommendations will be sufficient in themselves to support the continued development of these fundamental competencies in the Amherst curriculum. The prospect of further faculty deliberation and decisions about first-year seminars (see below), continuation of the excellent work of the working group on quantitative skills, and additional actions on writing across the curriculum (the Working Group for Writing Instruction, for example, recommended a committee on Writing Across the Curriculum) all hold promise for further actions on these crucial elements of liberal education. It may also be possible for the CEP to tie reauthorization of existing faculty positions to commitments to contribute curricular responses to meeting these challenges.

First-year seminar: First-year seminars have a long tradition at Amherst but with the decline of ‘interdisciplinary’ courses, no longer have a coherent rationale. Since they are currently the only required courses that all Amherst students take, it would seem particularly important to establish a shared institutional mission for them. Nationally, first-year seminars most frequently are intended primarily to help students at all levels develop their writing in the context of the discipline being taught.

Amherst faculty hold widely varied views about the virtue of directing seminars toward writing – worrying, for example, about imposing on resistant colleagues or about the ability to summon sufficient numbers of courses to achieve this goal. Clearly, other colleges have worked through these and other challenges. It will be important for the faculty to continue to learn from the experiences of other colleges and to sustain its successful efforts to address common curricular concerns by deciding on a shared purpose for these seminars.

Outside Departmental Reviews: Amherst has committed itself to a schedule of outside reviews of each of its academic departments/programs on a ten-year cycle. In the first ten years of these reviews, however, it has completed about ten reviews, and thus is behind schedule. The much more modest ‘self-studies’ completed for purposes of CAP are important steps toward self-assessment but do not substitute for independent review by scholar/teachers from other institutions. It will be important for Amherst faculty to pick up the pace of these reviews.

² “A Complicated Success? Assessing Academic Qualifications and Their Place in the Intellectual Life of our Students, with Special Attention to Diversity Initiatives,” a report completed in February 2008 by the Amherst faculty Committee on Admission and Financial Aid at the request of the Committee of Six.

Global Comprehension: The CAP report sets a high priority for globalization of an Amherst education. Just over one-third of the students at Amherst College study abroad. There is a desire to increase that number and to increase the proportion of students who study outside of English-speaking and European locations. The College recently finished a study recommending a permanent faculty committee be formed, which will be attentive to this goal and will provide oversight to assure high academic quality of the programs. [NB: This permanent committee was approved by the faculty on April 1, 2008.] Engaging faculty members in this way and helping students through the advising system to plan to allow for their time abroad will support Amherst's efforts to be more global. The College has also recently increased its staffing for administration of international programs from a half-time to a full position and intends to provide summer support for students who pursue intense summer study of a foreign language. The latter effort needs to be well coordinated with on-campus offerings, but will add importantly to the global mission. As these initiatives develop, the College will also need to be attentive to reintegrating students after study away and to helping them connect that experience with their subsequent academic work.

Experiential Education: An exciting faculty initiative emerged from the Experiential Education Working Paper spawned by the SCAE process and has moved forward rapidly to implementation. With the support of a generous grant directed specifically at the challenge of developing experiential education at Amherst, the College opened the Center for Community Engagement in 2007. This Center builds on the work of several pioneering faculty who have developed significant community-based learning components in their courses. It brings together support for student service activity with a central focus on connecting the academic program with community engagement. In addition to a full-time director and other staff support, the Center has the benefit of a faculty advisor and a small faculty advisory committee. This Center provides one very significant but still developing indication of "what it might mean for Amherst to take seriously the aspiration 'Terras Irradiant.'" It also represents another successful example of faculty leadership in bringing change to the academic program at the College – with vital support from the administration.

Assessment of Student Learning: The 1998 NEASC letter asked that Amherst "give particular emphasis to steps it has taken to: ...assure that students achieve a balance in their general education and assess students' learning in their general education studies." The College's 2008 Self-Study reports on the vastly extended support for and attention to assessment activities as they relate to the academic program. There are many examples of the direct relationship between this research (for example, on advising) and changes in academic practice. The addition of a staff support position (with a significant emphasis on research) to CEP has changed the operation of that Committee and enabled it to be much more involved in moving forward a broad policy agenda as was envisioned by the CAP report. In addition, Amherst has become deeply involved in collaborative efforts with other colleges to probe the meaning and character of liberal education (Teagle Foundation Working Group on an Open Curriculum). The report "A Complicated Success," referenced above, examines the changing profile of Amherst students and probes what full success in the embrace of diversity should mean.

This developing “culture of assessment” brings Amherst into the mainstream of peer institutions and provides vitally important evidence to inform policy decisions about the academic program. As part of that mainstream, however, Amherst must face more directly the enormous challenge of “assessing students’ learning.” Like their peers at many other liberal arts colleges, Amherst faculty and administrators are skeptical about standardized assessment tools. The challenge that the College and its peers face is to craft responsible ways of answering broad questions about what students learn over four years or through a major at the College or, more particularly, about how they develop particular skills such as writing over a college career. Engaging in the search for answers to these questions can and should be a productive part of efforts to develop and monitor new initiatives such as a writing-across-the-curriculum initiative.

Institutional Effectiveness: The past six years have been very productive ones at Amherst as faculty have taken on, with strong administration support, a wide range of issues in the academic program. The College has focused enormous energy and attention on examining “the quality, integrity, and effectiveness of its academic programs.” These examinations – many of which are still underway – have produced change and improvement in support for student learning and promise to deliver continuing constructive changes over the next several years.

5. Faculty

There is no doubt that Amherst College fulfills the expectations in Standard Five. The CVs of the faculty show them to be highly qualified, nearly all having appropriate terminal degrees, and to be very productive scholars. Many faculty members have won national or international recognition for their research or creative work. They are very loyal and dedicated to the College as evidenced by the Evaluation Team’s interactions with them, student comments, and their commitment to the governance of the College. Faculty salaries and benefits are competitive with peers.

Amherst College provides a high level and wide array of faculty development support, much of which is focused upon research and creative work. That support includes travel to professional meetings and other sorts of grant support for scholarly projects. In addition to providing partial or full salary to faculty during sabbatical leaves, the College offers approximately \$1 million each year in support of faculty research through the Faculty Research Award Program (FRAP). The faculty has an impressive record of attracting outside support for their work as well. The College appears to be ramping up support (which has been modest) for curricular and pedagogical activities, both for individual projects and for activities that are collective, such as teaching writing and advising. The leave program for scholarly projects is very generous. On April 5, 2008, the Board of Trustees approved 100% of salary for leaves, upon submission and approval of a research plan, as well as a full year’s leave at 100% salary for assistant professors after reappointment. An additional change being made is to ask faculty members to submit an updated CV and proposal for the leave. We commend these changes.

Amherst College has, in addition to the 167 tenure track faculty positions, about 20 fulltime Lecturer and Senior Lecturer positions teaching languages, music, and similar areas plus about 15 term positions in leave replacements and others teaching one or more courses on a part-time basis. This amounts to a roughly 8:1 student faculty ratio, which is low, but typical of its immediate peers. The strategic planning process recommended addition of 18 tenured or tenure track faculty FTEs to the College over the next several years. This increase follows a 20-year long cap of 165 tenured and tenure track positions established in 1987. Last year Amherst College allocated the first two positions and will move ahead in allocating about four per year for the next several years. The CAP process that led to this proposed addition and the Committee of Educational Priorities process of reviewing proposals are quite impressive and strategically strong.

The Faculty Handbook clearly lays out expectations and processes relevant to faculty members at Amherst College. The faculty is very actively engaged in shared governance; in fact, some are concerned that they are too engaged and that this is contributing to higher than acceptable levels of stress for some faculty members.

The faculty at Amherst is heavily weighted toward the full professor rank, and the College anticipates a high level of turnover in the next few years. This comes at precisely the time of an expansion of the faculty, so Amherst will need to welcome and adjust to a large infusion of new faculty members. This dramatic demographic shift will have profound implications for curricular changes, general enculturation issues, faculty governance, and others. The College may need to think about the duties of the Committee of Six, particularly with regard to its responsibility for reappointment and tenure review as the number of such reviews likely will increase dramatically.

The reappointment and tenure review process for pre-tenure faculty members is rigorous and well understood by the pre-tenure faculty members. They indicated that they understand the standards and process and believe it to be fair. The process involves peer and student review of teaching, plus internal and external reviews of scholarship. We were a bit surprised that there is little post-tenure review. The review for promotion to the rank of professor involves only a letter about scholarship, teaching and service from the department to the Committee of Six, as well as an optional self-report from the candidate, and there is no further review. There is no uniformly implemented end-of course evaluation system by students or regular review by peers. The faculty has just approved a statement asking each tenured faculty member to ask students for comments in at least three courses over every three-year period. We suggest that the College monitor this situation and determine if any further changes should ensue. A sound review process for non-tenure track faculty members exists. Students' evaluations of teaching and classroom observation by members of the department apply to lecturers and are reviewed in ways similar to the review of assistant professors. Senior lecturers are reviewed every five years, with continued reference to student and departmental evaluations.

The CAP planning process has made effective use of data from other institutions. We observed less knowledge about the context of curricular and pedagogical work at similar institutions. For instance, many other national liberal arts colleges offer a first-year

seminar, but there was not much awareness of that or understanding of the learning goals for such courses. The situation is similar with campus-wide support for student writing. We suggest that the Dean's Office encourage faculty members to review the work of peers and perhaps visit similar institutions.

In a number of meetings with faculty members, concern was expressed about teaching outside the areas of immediate competence. This concern was expressed most often about teaching of writing and teaching first-year seminars. We would encourage the College to try to find ways to support faculty members teaching outside their comfort zones as a way to help students with the overarching priorities of the College, such as critical thinking, oral and written communication, and global understanding, as well as modeling for students what they hope Amherst students will develop: the ability to take on new content and explore areas outside their formal training in order to "live principled lives of consequence."

Institutional Effectiveness: Over the next several years Amherst will need to replace a large number of retiring faculty members. It is clear that the College regularly reviews its need for faculty in various programs and provides support for faculty members to be effective teachers and scholars. Amherst is to be lauded for the impressive planning process that has been undertaken since the last review. The academic administration, faculty members, and others have produced a marvelous CAP report and are moving to implement its recommendations for a process for evaluation of proposals for reallocation of faculty positions and allocation of new positions; the reevaluation of the scholarly leave policy; and allocation of new resources to support curricular and pedagogical development. Much progress has been made on implementation, although there's still a distance to go. The College community needs to celebrate its accomplishments while supporting members of the community in the real stretch that the planning process demands.

6. Students

Although Amherst is fortunate to have had an outstanding student body feeling both challenged and supported by the College for a long time, it is impressive to see how much has changed and improved in the areas covered by Standard Six since 1998 re-accreditation. The College has continued its successful efforts to enroll a student body representing a wide range of racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds, and in recent years it has set goals for significantly increasing the socio-economic diversity of its entering classes. Amherst's current student body is a diverse group of 849 men and 834 women. As reported on its Web site, the College enrolls students from nearly every state and from more than 40 countries, and for the past several years more than 35% of Amherst's students have been students of color. Of the 474 students of Class of 2011, 54% are female, 38% are students of color, and 8% are international students. Amherst has worked to ensure that its recruited athletes have the talents and characteristics necessary to succeed in all aspects of their experience at Amherst. The faculty and student services staff have been honest and responsible in acknowledging that recruiting students from

more diverse backgrounds will mean a wider range in the kinds and quality of preparation for Amherst, and that new kinds of support must be in place to allow them to thrive.

Admissions: While its numbers of highly qualified applicants continue to rise, Amherst has successfully resolved a number of problems in this area. Where once there was great faculty concern over the kinds of students being recruited to play in its highly competitive athletic program, the Dean of Admission and Financial Aid and his staff are now trusted and the admissions process is seen as transparent and fair. The intellectual curiosity that the faculty prizes in its students can and does coexist with athletic talent. Now, faculty members help in recruiting athletes while emphasizing Amherst's academic program and the promise of individual attention from faculty members.

The admissions staff has become significantly more diverse itself in its racial/ethnic composition and has worked with many outside groups (QuestBridge and several others) to locate academically talented students in schools and communities outside of Amherst's traditional feeder areas. They have a staff member assigned to help recruit transfer students from community colleges, and that program is bringing 15 gifted students into each class. Creative programs such as "telementoring" are helping them make the decision whether to come and to succeed once enrolled.

The faculty Committee on Admission and Financial Aid has been proactive in responding to faculty questions about possible lowering of standards in achieving socio-economic diversity. The committee's above-referenced report "A Complicated Success?" is thoughtful and challenging and highlights the College's commitment to enrolling students it is best prepared to serve. Retention and graduation rates remain in the high nineties, and there is every reason to believe that neither they nor the intellectual quality of students will drop as greater diversity is achieved since it is being done with great care and planning.

Financial Aid: Amherst has joined the group of colleges and universities that will replace loans with grants for students on financial aid. Adjusting to that change budgetarily has been made easier by excellent planning by the Dean of Financial Aid. That decision will certainly ease the stress of financial concerns on students from low-income families. What is more unusual and probably makes a big difference is the way the Financial Aid office supports these students with small grants to cover expenses that arise for all students as they begin college. If there is to be a refund when all of a student's grants come in, it is paid directly to the student at the start of the term. Students are also made aware that if they have unanticipated and serious financial needs, they can turn to Financial Aid for help. These gestures are meaningful and contribute to making low income students feel welcome and supported.

Athletics: While changes in the admissions process have brought significant improvement to the College's athletic program and the experience of athletes, a number of other initiatives are also very promising. To bridge the gap between athletic and academic aspects of students' lives, "faculty liaisons" have been appointed for each team. They help recruit new students, emphasizing the quality of the academic and athletic experience that Amherst offers, and they meet first-year team members to discuss the kinds of

academic support available and how to make the best use of faculty. The faculty liaisons also attend practices and games in order to get to know the coaches, players, and the athletic experience, and thus are knowledgeable and can be very effective in helping negotiate conflicts that arise between individual students and faculty members over, for example, missing classes for competitions.

All Amherst athletes were surveyed recently to get a sense of how participation on a team affected their overall experience at Amherst. This provides the Athletic Director and her staff with a much-needed context for individual anecdotes about negative experiences. The Athletic Director also encourages her staff and the student-athletes themselves to talk directly with faculty members who seem to harbor negative attitudes toward athletics, instead of simply retreating into frustration and resentment. She is talking with athletes about ways their behavior can puncture or reinforce stereotypes, and she is having some success. Off-campus fraternities that exist without College sanction offer a parallel social outlet that can lead to problematic divisions on teams. Appropriate attention is being paid to the matter and overall there is much positive activity in athletics.

Residential Life: The newly completed First-Year Quad seems to be a great success, allowing programming and support for all first-year students to be improved. Faculty Fellows have been assigned to each of the first-year dorms, and the initial reports are that their events are well attended. This program helps new students get to know faculty in a relaxed setting outside the classroom, and it introduces programming into the residence halls that connects to their academic and intellectual experiences at Amherst. Although many institutions have attempted similar programs, Amherst's seems unusually well thought out and much likelier to succeed.

Community Engagement: The new Center for Community Engagement holds great promise for helping larger numbers of students find satisfying and useful ways to engage with Amherst's on- and off-campus communities. The students with whom the Evaluation Team met worried about the apathy of their peers. The staff being created for the Center for Community Engagement should help students find opportunities to "engage the world around them" and "link learning with leadership." The important role students play on faculty committees constitutes another further significant form of engagement and training in leadership. Those positions, that students at many institutions would envy, allow them to work closely with faculty as colleagues and to help shape Amherst in profound ways.

Career Development: A search is currently underway for a new Director of the Career Center, with many of the recommendations made by a recent external review awaiting his or her arrival. Although the staffing devoted to foreign study advising has been increased, there still is not adequate staff time for independent work with students who are undecided or confused about career options. Young alumni are also asking for more support in translating their liberal arts experience into satisfying employment, and a dedicated position should at least be considered.

Advising³: The Dean of Students Office is respected by both students and faculty and provides important supports to both groups. Its staff has made great strides in representing and responding to the increased diversity of the student body. Providing outreach to first-generation students is a high priority for all of the deans. The interim position in Student Affairs for Diversity and Academic Support will be made permanent and that position could provide, as well, leadership for the new Multicultural Center, which has been the goal of a student-led initiative and has been approved. While an appropriate space may have to await completion of the residential complex that will replace the Social Dorms, an interim office space appears to have been located. Support for affinity groups is important for their own sake and for the quality of the interactions across cultural groups.

7. Library and Other Information Resources

Specific concerns about information technology staffing which were cited in the 1998 re-accreditation evaluation have been systematically and adequately addressed. During the course of the Evaluation Team's visit and research, a consistent portrayal of the Amherst College Library and information technology (IT) services emerged, characterized by rapid change in services, information resource delivery, and organizational structure; a strong academic support orientation; and a dynamic responsiveness to faculty and student needs – as well as a commitment to bringing national best practices to the attention of the Amherst community in order to better position Amherst as a leader in information resources and technology.

Library Collections and Access to Information Resources: Library collections are extensive in terms of breadth of coverage (over one million volumes) and the ability to serve the needs of Amherst faculty and students, rivaling collection size and scope of some established university research libraries. The Library has a strong collection-development orientation, which underpins the ongoing review and analysis of collection needs and access. Library Archives and Special Collections provide scholars with unique resources unusual for a college of Amherst's size, thus serving as a regional, national, and international scholarly repository as well.

Annual materials budget increments averaging 7% have been able to keep pace with inflation, and robust Library endowments further enhance the Library's ability to provide information resources needed. Financial support of library collections reflects positively on the value that the College places on the Library overall.

Library staff provides a variety of access tools and services to address the information needs of faculty and staff and to facilitate engagement with library staff and collections. In particular, the library liaison program links departments and disciplines directly with library subject expertise to build collections and expand services.

The participation in the Five Colleges organization provides significantly enhanced access to research collections and services for Amherst faculty and students. Continued evolution

³ Refer to Sections 4 and 5 of this report for further discussion of academic advising

of the Five Colleges cooperative library services will provide further enhanced benefits to Amherst constituents.

Information Literacy: Information literacy as a desired student-learning component is well understood by library staff in the context of national information literacy discussions. Much work has been done in the past year to articulate more clearly the definition of information literacy goals for Amherst as well as means by which librarians can address these goals.

While the library staff has a clear commitment to information literacy, it is not as clear how consistently information literacy is understood or accepted by the faculty, or how information literacy and related critical thinking skills might be addressed within the curricular framework beyond separate library or IT instruction sessions. “Broadening our Information Resources” was endorsed in the CAP report, with the specific observation that “A twenty-first century graduate must know how to find, evaluate, and contextualize information in numerous formats...” (CAP Report, p. 18). Information literacy, then, should be discussed as a potential student-learning outcome in the same pedagogical context as writing and quantitative reasoning.

New curricular initiatives, particularly any expanded incorporation of information literacy into the curriculum, may necessitate expanded library staffing on the professional level. Library staffing needs should be assessed early on in information literacy and other student-learning component planning discussions

Library Facilities: Although the Frost Library is in need of overall renovation and expansion to reflect changing student use and research patterns, as well as new formats of materials and information access, Frost has been adapted in an ongoing basis to respond to these emerging facility-related needs. Group study areas, comfortable seating, and wireless expansion all serve to enhance the library study and research experience.

A Library Planning Committee has engaged an architectural-and-planning firm to aid in the necessary “revisioning” of Frost and is moving forward in this endeavor in a systemic and systematic fashion. As this important longer-term project continues, care should be taken that Frost and branch library facilities receive ongoing, near-term upgrades.

IT Organization and Staffing: The Information Technology Department’s organizational structure has been realigned and its staffing significantly increased in order to serve Amherst constituents in a more coherent and responsive fashion. The six divisions of the department appear to work in effective collaboration to move the IT services closer to student and faculty needs. In particular, the Academic Technology Services unit has incorporated Media Services, previously part of the Library, and some Help Desk assistance so that faculty point-of-need service has been enhanced and clarified. Although the IT staff is now robust in number (40+) there is concern about large numbers of upcoming retirements and the lack of cross training or redundancy of expertise.

The IT department reflects a spirit of both innovation and collaboration that is commendable and should be encouraged. Implementing new and creative technological approaches in partnership with faculty, such as the recent gaming and art digitization initiatives, will only help the faculty at large to improve its teaching and scholarship.

IT division leadership is well aware that technology is not an end to itself, but rather an opportunity to improve existing processes to better achieve the institution's mission. On the other hand, the often transformative potential of technology necessitates a change in organizational culture that is, at best, uncomfortable for those it serves. IT should work closely with faculty governance, continuing the good work of the Faculty Computer Committee, to help the faculty understand the impact and implications of technology on College culture. At the same time, both academic departments and administrative divisions ready for technological innovation and change should continue to be engaged in piloting or trying new applications.

Information Technology Infrastructure: Implementation of enterprise systems, such as Datatel for administrative systems and the recent content management system (CMS), have and will continue to make availability of administrative and academic information more consistent and easily updated throughout the College. When implementing enterprise systems that facilitate the centralization and standardization of information, care should be taken that the unique needs of individual units are appropriately engaged and accommodated in a timely fashion.

Already benefiting from the Five College fiber ring, a planned campus network upgrade will further enhance network capacity and reliability. Maintaining the security of campus systems is an on-going concern for IT professionals, with staff largely needing to monitor potential security breaches typically out of their control.

The redesigned Amherst Web site, incorporating the new CMS, will result in greater consistency and expanded Web services. Both the CMS and Web redesign will facilitate future technological and service enhancements.

At the same time, recent faculty anxiety over the potential of the new CMS to precipitously replace the BlackBoard learning management system exemplifies the need for the central IT unit to pay special attention to clear, consistent, and continuous communication about changing systems.

IT Budget and Planning: The IT department has been well supported through the budget process. In addition, members of the department work with faculty on grants, from both internal and external funding sources, in which technology is a significant component.

IT has developed a year-by-year planning framework, which has thus far worked well in upgrading IT across campus in a remarkably short period of time. IT leadership has identified the need to create a larger IT strategic plan that charts goals, objectives and action steps for future initiatives and also recognizes the rapid and often unpredictable rate of change in IT – making longer term planning inherently difficult.

Attention should continue to be paid to College policies and how they may be affected by emerging IT, as demonstrated by the establishment of the recent Acceptable Use policy. Privacy/confidentiality, intellectual property, copyright, federal compliance standards, etc., are all potentially reshaped by communications technologies and should be reviewed in that context in concert with the Library and other relevant departments.

Institutional Effectiveness: Both the Library and IT use a variety of mechanisms to monitor, assess, reevaluate, and reconsider their systems, services, and resources. Faculty and student advisory committees and periodic user surveys, focus groups, and project-related planning initiatives serve to keep client needs at the forefront of service development. Library and IT staff also keep abreast of national trends in libraries and IT, and benchmark their services against those of peer institutions. Because implementation of new strategic initiatives and planning for future development have been very recent phenomena, appraisal, projections, and assessment are inherently difficult. Creating an ongoing strategic planning framework and institutionalizing assessment mechanisms will ensure that new initiatives are prioritized within a broader planning context.

8. Physical and Technological Resources

The campus of Amherst College provides an idyllic location to pursue a topnotch liberal arts education. On the edge of a quaint New England town with views of the mountains from the campus, the College offers attractive, well-maintained facilities that provide students a welcoming and supportive environment for study. Over the past decade the College has ramped up facilities planning, construction and modernization. Since 2000, some twenty-five major projects at a cost of over \$175 million have been completed. Eight of those projects constituted new construction; the remainder were additions, comprehensive interior and exterior renovations, and infrastructure amelioration. The planning for this work, the funding, the program changes, and the disruption in the daily life of the campus have been handled in a thoughtful, careful way with the constant goal to serve the academic mission. The College has made capital financial planning part of its overall financial model. The Treasurer's Office has projected capital needs and secured bond financing when timely; the Advancement Office secured gifts where appropriate, and relevant members of the College community have been participants in various processes to support major improvements.

Perhaps the most far-reaching facilities planning work completed over the past ten years was the Residential Master Plan. By 2007 the plan had resulted in the completion of an integrated review of all residence halls, construction of a first-year quad and two new residence halls to the southeast of campus, and a plan for renovation of all remaining residence halls across campus. The next residential construction planned is for the "Social Dorms," which require demolition and replacement. The campus is proud of its accomplishments in the Residential Master Plan, and rightly so.

In addition to the residential hall planning, several committees have looked at two other major capital projects for consideration in the near future. Both the Merrill Science Center and the Frost Library are academic facilities that soon will no longer fully meet program needs. The Merrill Science Center has teaching spaces that are not as effective as they should be, and the Frost Library is a building that may not be performing as well as it should. While the appropriateness of placing these two projects in the queue for renovation/modernization seems to reflect the opinions of committee members who have reviewed these projects, it is widely acknowledged that a more thorough assessment of program needs within both buildings is the next step. The College is well staffed in the Facilities area to support these reviews and the processes for how to take up these considerations are in place. The College has a strong project management staff, which has been successful in moving projects to completion within budget and on time.

The next challenge for the College is to develop an academic facilities assessment and plan that would be similar to the Residential Master Plan. An inventory of academic space, space quality/condition, safety issues and accessibility under ADA, projected program changes within those spaces, and estimated costs is an important piece of work for the College to take up in the coming years. This planning process will need to be integrated across the campus and coordinated with other planning efforts. An Academic Facilities Planning Committee has been organized to take a lead role in this work. In identifying the long-term capital spending needs for the work on residence halls, the College has been very proactive, and similarly it will be necessary to build a financial framework to accomplish the work on academic spaces.

For some years the College has embraced issues of sustainability. Recycling initiatives, energy conservation, the construction of a co-generation plant, an increasing use of hybrid vehicles, and other initiatives are important and will reflect the interests of many across campus and perhaps especially those interests of faculty and staff associated with the newly created environmental studies major.

With regard to technology, there seems to be a strong partnership between the Facilities people and the IT people on campus as each capital project is identified. When necessary, outside consultants are utilized to ensure that IT standards are identified and adhered to, that instrumentation performance, testing and calibration is completed and that there is an understanding for how technology is integrated into academic programming. This is strength and should be further encouraged.

Institutional Effectiveness: Amherst College has an excellent record of engagement of constituencies across the campus in the discussion of priorities. An institution with significant resources always has many choices among a variety of possible facilities and technological projects that can support the academic program. Through long conversations at the College across constituencies, the intended outcome is to have everyone on board about program needs and then funding requirements. Similarly, Amherst has been successful in using this model to evaluate its physical and technological needs in support of its academic mission.

9. Financial Resources

The financial resources to support the mission of Amherst College are remarkably strong and noteworthy. With an endowment of \$1.7 billion, investment prowess, highly selective admissions from a growing application pool, enthusiastic donor participation, and careful management of the institution's assets and debt, the College is positioned to remain a leader in liberal arts education. Through constant long range financial planning the College has strengthened its financial flexibility to respond to externally imposed challenges and internally driven desires to improve and expand its academic programs.

Over the past ten years the College's endowment has grown from \$474 million to \$1.7 billion at June 30, 2007. During this period the average investment return was 15.9%. The endowment growth resulted from close attention to asset allocation, manager selection and monitoring, and approval of appropriate spending by the senior leadership of the institution, and by the full Board of Trustees, notably by the Investment Committee. Spending from the endowment provides significant support – about one-third – to the College's operating budget.

About one-half of the College's operating revenue comes from student revenue. A strong applicant pool and implementation of a planned expansion (100 students) in the size of the on-campus student body will enhance revenue from tuition, room and board. However, this increase also may result in higher financial aid distributions. Need-blind admissions and a highly competitive financial aid program that includes meeting full need for domestic students and, also, in a policy approved by the Board of Trustees on April 5, 2008, international students will continue to ensure the highest quality student body from across the country and around the world.

Amherst is to be commended for its long term financial planning managed by the Treasurer's Office. A ten-year financial plan, supported by financial modeling and updated annually, is the subject of review by senior leadership, by a multi-constituent committee (the Committee on Priorities and Resources), and by the Board of Trustees. Annual balanced budgets are projected with assumptions about tuition revenue increases, the need for additional financial aid, investment returns, gifts, expansion of faculty lines (18 FTE total, 2FTE already granted, 4 FTE/year beginning in 2008), and ongoing expenses. Included in these projections are funds for needed capital maintenance of facilities. The College makes extensive use of the bond market to fund large capital projects and has not been adversely affected by recent disruptions in this market due to sub-prime mortgage lending or bond insurer concerns.

Opportunities for significant new revenue will likely come from a comprehensive campaign now in the planning stage. With a history of alumni participation in giving to the College that is among the highest in the country, senior leadership and a development staff that is ready to meet the demands of a new campaign, and a well-reviewed list of projects for fundraising, the College has every chance to be successful in accumulating new resources for the advancement of the College's programs and achievement of its new goals.

By some comparisons and measures, Amherst has been conservative in its endowment spending rate. The 3.5-5% spending range target has served the College well over the past ten or so years. The one-year spending rate for the year ended June 30, 2007 was 4.0%; the three-year average spending rate was 4.5%. A 4.5% spending rate is the target going forward. However, negative changes in the economy, potentially a more challenging donor gift climate, general concern about the affordability of private college/university education, and possible continuing public scrutiny of wealthy tax-exempt institutions and their spending rates that are perceived to be too low (less than 5%) may require the College to undertake reviews of its spending policy in the coming years.

Institutional Effectiveness: Over many years Amherst has developed a consultative, transparent process to secure the resources for the College's academic program. Annual audits provided by Price Waterhouse Coopers LLP offer external assurance of the integrity of their financial condition. Appropriate internal assessment and evaluation by senior leadership in partnership with the Board of Trustees and its committees, by various constituencies and their committees across the campus, and by a recently created, well-functioning office of institutional research, provide the necessary data for constant improvement.

10. Public Disclosure

Amherst College has provided a complete audit of publications and Web-based communications, both within its Self-Study Report and in the requisite CIHE Form for Public Disclosure. Upon review of recruitment publications, the College catalogue, the Student Handbook, and the recently redesigned Web site, it appears that information, data, and substantive content about Amherst is consistently presented and easily accessible to all of its various constituents as appropriate and necessary. Various campus offices work together with the public affairs office to manage communications materials and information vehicles. The College presents a coherent, consistent, and accurate portrayal of itself to its internal and external stakeholders. Communications content is centrally coordinated and reviewed. The new Web redesign and content management system greatly enhance accessibility to information about Amherst and will facilitate ease of updating information as it changes. Focus groups and collaboration with the Office of Institutional Research and Planning contribute to better understanding of communication needs and communication effectiveness.

Institutional Effectiveness: Various Amherst offices work together to evaluate communication needs. Some publications have specific advisory committees that review content and presentation on an ongoing basis. Coordination is effective in assuring consistency and clarity of information and messaging.

11. Integrity

Amherst College subscribes to and advocates high ethical standards in every aspect of its functioning. Since coming to agreement on a revised mission statement, the College has worked impressively to see that its practices exemplify the values it articulates.

The openness with which the College conducts its affairs, giving students and faculty full access to and participation in crucial decision-making, was obvious to all of us on the visiting team. Its grievance procedures are clear and viewed as fair by staff.

The institution of an Honor Code in recent years has created another way of reminding students of the importance of integrity in their academic work.

Amherst College as an institution demonstrates honesty and integrity and expects the same from its faculty, staff, and students.

Institutional Effectiveness Summary

In a very short time Amherst has succeeded in establishing a culture of careful evaluation and evidence-based planning, which has offered the foundation for the planning initiatives referred to above and which now permeates literally every area of institutional decision-making. Amherst's self-study, evaluation, and planning for the future are distinguished by collection and review of qualitative and quantitative data, the engagement of constituencies across the campus, and a commitment to providing an education of the highest standard – with expanded emphases in writing, quantitative skills, interdisciplinarity, global comprehension, the creative arts, and community engagement – to an increasingly diverse student body. The College's recent crafting and adoption of a revised mission statement is reflective of the inclusive and deliberative nature of its planning process. The substance of the statement, with its emphasis on the values and skills students need to learn in order to be productive, engaged, and critical citizens, is equally reflective of the depth, integrity and farsightedness of the institution's leadership. As noted earlier in this document, thoughtful and thorough self-examination, especially in key areas such as the depth and breadth of the curriculum, faculty assessment and development, and adequacy of staffing and facilities, will produce – indeed, has already produced, to a large degree – improvements and enhancements that will result in a continued exceptional educational experience over the long term.

Summary

It is the view of the Evaluation Team that Amherst College is, without question, an extraordinary institution, offering as it does an academic and broader educational program of unsurpassed quality. The College's success in faculty and student recruitment and retention, in creating deeply satisfying and empowering undergraduate experiences for its students and an affirming and productive environment for its faculty, in cultivating a dedicated and highly generous alumni community, in prudent management of its

resources, in pursuing continuing deliberative institutional assessment and planning based upon it, and in the strength of its commitment to access and opportunity for a diverse student population have established the College as a widely admired and deeply valued leader in American higher education.

Strengths

- An intensely committed Board, an inspiring and effective President, a deeply intelligent and caring senior administration, and a terrific faculty, staff and students, together bring the energy, the institutional dedication and the educational vision that have allowed the College to reach its current level of excellence and will, we are confident, ensure the continuity of that excellence over the years ahead.
- The Evaluation Team was particularly impressed by the College's recent success in composing a compelling, collectively endorsed statement of mission and by the new directions articulated by the Committee on Academic Priorities, which also was collectively endorsed by the community and, in many areas, in remarkably short order, already achieved. Supplementing the central planning initiatives have been, as well, an array of important evaluation and planning efforts, ranging across facilities, technology, institutional research, and resource management, in each case attention was given to ensure that the staff, facilities and other resources needed are in place to achieve success.
- In sum, grounded in past efforts, but propelled by the present administration, Amherst has taken an historic step forward in articulating its distinctive mission and defining and embarking on what will maximize the achievement of that mission. Moreover, the success in articulation, definition and initial implementation have energized administration and faculty with a palpable confidence and excitement that promise success in navigating complexities inherent in areas of implementation that lie ahead.

Suggestions

To help sustain these superb dimensions of institutional effectiveness, we suggest:

- That careful attention be paid to the consequences that a major turnover in current faculty in conjunction with the addition of the proposed new faculty positions may have on the culture of the College, the curriculum, the need for new facilities and the system of governance.
- That particular attention be paid to ways through which the new Center for Community Engagement might become a springboard for a deeper sense of social responsibility across the student body and through which the new

environmental studies program might act to heighten understanding of and engagement with issues of sustainability.

- That particular attention be paid to staffing needs in admissions and career development, to the support of affinity groups in their effort to create a more inclusive community, and to meeting students' desire to feel more a part of a full campus community.
- That the collaborative planning, and the prudent approach to funding and construction, evidenced in the residence hall project, be the model for future renovation and construction projects and for the assessment of academic facilities that is about to get underway.
- That the College decide across the various areas of technology where it wants to position itself along the continuum from keeping current to leading innovation and plan for the staff and resources required to support those decisions.
- That the financial commitments the College has recently made to financial aid, faculty positions, facilities, etc. may, in a downward tending market, lead to 5% spending on the endowment and suggest, particularly given the strength of Amherst's development success and potential, the College gain more comfort with that possible eventuality.

Beyond these several suggestions, and others that appear in our discussion of the standards, are five more demanding challenges we see ahead.

Concerns

- The Evaluation Team has great faith in the process of completing implementation of the Committee on Academic Priorities for the curriculum. However, understanding how much thought, creativity and consensus-building will be required to reach that completion, we believe it necessary to express the urgency of reaching a constructive conclusion particularly in the areas of writing and of quantitative skills. Given Amherst's commitment to enrolling under-prepared students it is all the more incumbent upon the College to ensure that the students rapidly develop the writing and quantitative skills that they will need to thrive in whatever major they pursue. Whether through requirements or, for example, through asking departments to articulate the skills prerequisite to majoring in them, whether the full burden of instruction falls on regular faculty or is shared with instructional staff, it is critical that appropriate curricular structures are in place to deliver these skills.
- As part of the deliberative process that leads to meeting student needs in the area of writing and quantitative skills, we believe it important as well to define more clearly the purposes of first-year seminars, and, if they are to be preserved, whether they should be expected to play a role in meeting writing and/or quantitative objectives.

- There is a lack of clarity on the ideal distribution across categories of courses that a student might be advised to pursue. Particularly in light of the academic directions articulated in the CAP recommendations (e.g., quantitative skills, writing, globalization, foreign languages, interdisciplinary engagement, performing and studio arts) and in light of the emergence of newly important skills (e.g., informational literacy) it is important that the faculty discuss and seek consensus on the contours of that distribution. In so doing, they will as well bring greater consistency and strength to the advising system.
- We recognize the strong tradition and current effectiveness of the faculty committee organization, but are concerned that over time the workload required by certain committees and particularly by the Committee of Six, might begin to interfere seriously with teaching commitments and professional development. Although we do not suggest a change at this point, we do believe it important that the faculty continue to monitor the situation with an open view to the possibility that some of the governance or personnel responsibilities of the Committee of Six might be assigned to other committees.
- Great strides have been made in developing a culture of assessment across the institution. In that light, we look forward to a resumption of the established pace for external departmental reviews and to the development of means to evaluate student learning not only at the class and departmental level but as accumulative general educational achievement. In that effort Amherst will be helping the entire liberal arts community to make progress towards an important goal.