

Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, and 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
Amherst College on
April 15–18, 2018

Members of the Team

Chairperson: Dr. Ronald D. Liebowitz, President; Brandeis University; Waltham, Massachusetts

Dr. Sheryl Culotta, Associate Provost; Wesleyan University; Middletown, Connecticut

Mr. Andrew Evans, (Former) Vice President for Finance and Treasurer; Wellesley College;
Wellesley, Massachusetts

Dr. Lori Kletzer, Professor of Economics; Colby College; Waterville, Maine

Dr. Steve Leavitt, Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students; Union College;
Schenectady, New York

Dr. Jennifer Rachford, Director of Institutional Research; Pomona College; Claremont, California

Dr. Andrew Shennan, Provost and Dean of the College; Wellesley College; Wellesley,
Massachusetts

Assisting the Team: Dr. J. Bart Morrison, ACE Fellow at Brandeis University; Waltham,
Massachusetts

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

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

Preface Page to the Team Report

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

Date form completed: April 18, 2018

Name of Institution: Amherst College

1. History: Year chartered or authorized: **1825** Year first degrees awarded **1825**

2. Type of control: State City Religious Group
 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	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Baccalaureate	1836	0	1836	96%	95%	483
Graduate	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

(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	3.3 (draft)	1.2	2.4
Three-year Loan Repayment Rate	83%	85%	83%

	Associate	Baccalaureate	Graduate
Average % of graduates leaving with debt	n/a	29%	n/a
Average amount of debt for graduates	n/a	\$19,075	n/a

6. Number of current faculty: Full-time **223** Part-time **68** FTE **245.67**

7. Current fund data for most recently completed fiscal year: (Specify year: **2017-2018**)
 (Double click in any cell to enter spreadsheet. Enter dollars in millions, e.g., \$1,456,200 = \$1.456)

Revenues		Expenditures	
Tuition	\$65.856	Instruction	\$43.108
Gov't Appropriations	\$0.000	Research	\$4.043
Gifts/Grants/Endowment	\$113.443	General	\$24.770
Auxiliary Enterprises	\$4.420	Auxiliary Enterprises	\$15.364
Other	\$3.003	Other	\$99.437
Total	\$186.722	Total	\$186.722

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

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

10. Is instruction offered through a contractual relationship?
 No Yes Specify program(s): _____

Introduction

The team begins its report by expressing sincere thanks to President Carolyn (Bid)dy Martin, to her senior team, and to the faculty, students, staff, and the trustees with whom the team met during its visit. The team wishes to thank, in particular, Janet Tobin, Associate Dean for Academic Administration, and Jesse Barba, Director of Institutional Research and Registrar Services, for producing extremely clear, candid, and comprehensive materials, and for assisting the team in all aspects of its work.

The Amherst self-study brought together a wide range of documents and information that succeeded in conveying a comprehensive overview of Amherst's enduring mission, robust traditions, recent innovation and experimentation, and dynamic vision for the future. It assisted the team in identifying and understanding the most salient strengths and challenges that have become prominent during the previous decade. The team was able to validate the conclusions of the self-study in numerous meetings with members of the Amherst community during the campus visit, which took place April 15–18, 2018. The team members met with members of the Board of Trustees (both of whom are alumni), the college administration, the faculty, staff, and students. These many meetings and the team's review of the self-study and its supporting documents, as well as the chair's preliminary visit to Amherst, which took place in October 2017, all provide the basis for the judgments contained in this report.

Since opening its doors in 1821, Amherst has committed itself to the values of the liberal arts, academic rigor, and the widening of educational opportunity. These enduring commitments have led, over the past fifteen years, to a significant transformation of the make-up of the student body. Since its last decennial review, Amherst has introduced an impressive array of strategies that enabled the college to assemble quickly a student body that possesses the highest potential for achievement and that is representative of the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity of the country.

Since 2011, under the seasoned and visionary leadership of its president, Bid)dy Martin, the college has continued to pursue its mission and commitments, especially to the widening of educational opportunity; it has done so with a focus and commitment rarely seen on a college campus. With the recent transformation of the composition of the student body as a focal point of the institution's future, Amherst has engaged a strategic planning process along with careful evaluation of its curriculum, system of advising, support of student life, athletics, the campus infrastructure, human resources, information technology, diversity and inclusion, policies and procedures surrounding sexual misconduct, freedom of expression, plus more. In the process, several opportunities and challenges, many of them predictable given the pace of change at a traditional institution such as Amherst, have emerged. We hope our visit and ensuing report will provide the Amherst leadership with an opportunity to consider many of these issues, and gain a valuable perspective from a supportive visiting team.

As Amherst moves into the next stages of storied history, it faces a new set of challenges that the team believes the institution is prepared to engage and tackle. Some of these challenges are inherent to any major change management effort, while others are directly related to the college's particular nature. Combined, these challenges have forced the college to reassess a number of long-standing traditions. The team believes Amherst is finding creative ways to retain and promote those enduring traditions that continue to serve the community while, at the same

time, will continue to experiment in order to identify and amend those aspects of its operations and current processes that need to change. We offer the following summary of our findings—both the strengths and challenges—in the spirit of contributing to the incredible energy and commitment the team has found in its short, but intensive and enlightening visit.

This report is a comprehensive evaluation of Amherst College following the interim report submitted and accepted in 2013.

Standard 1: Mission and Purpose

Amherst College was founded in 1821 with the motto *Terras irradiant*: “Let them give light to the world.” On the cusp of its bicentennial, the college, which is among the most prominent American institutions of higher education, continues to give light to the world. Its mission statement, approved by its Board of Trustees in 2007, states unequivocally that its purpose is “educating men and women of exceptional potential from all backgrounds so they may seek, value, and advance knowledge; engage the world around them; and lead principled lives of consequence.” Remarkably, this is the college’s first formal mission statement.

The 2007 mission statement, validated routinely over the past decade for its continuing relevance and acceptance by multiple constituencies, is visible in college publications and planning documents. It is set forth in a clear and concise manner, and defines the institution’s distinctive character. It provided a strong basis for the comprehensive, ambitious 2015 Strategic Plan and will guide priorities for the newly announced \$625 million capital campaign. The institution’s purpose is clear and realistic, and underscores the college’s dedication to scholarship, research, and public service.

The team was impressed by the consistency with which all Amherst College constituencies understood the college’s mission, from members of the Board of Trustees, to faculty, students, and staff. There was agreement on the team that few institutions enjoy such loyalty and shared sense of purpose, though attaining many of the goals that flow from the mission statement through the Strategic Plan will require adjustments—most notably, shifts in culture and governance, especially among senior faculty. These adjustments are addressed in detail in other parts of this report.

Standard 2: Planning and Evaluation

Overview: Amherst has developed a culture of planning and evaluation characterized by the regular review of challenges and opportunities in the context of the college’s educational mission, with planning routines and structures present on multiple levels across academic and administrative domains.

One current and prominent example is the 2015 Strategic Plan for Amherst College (SPAC), the culmination of a process that unfolded over more than two years and engaged seven committees composed of representatives of a full range of institutional stakeholders. The plan presents a clear vision for the future, built around seven priority areas.

The visiting team frequently heard faculty and staff members reference the seven areas as an important focal point for the work of the college. In contrast to previous efforts, faculty described the recent strategic planning process as highly consultative, reflective, and iterative. Constructive criticism focused on dilution of some perspectives in the final version of the plan and on questions about implementation. For example, “research college,” a term favored by some as an apt description of Amherst’s unique approach, was omitted. One science faculty member was surprised to learn of the current campaign priority to name and endow seventeen new faculty positions in the sciences, and expressed a desire for more faculty involvement in thinking about the extent and direction of growth in the context of overall curricular balance at the college. The administration clarified that new faculty lines would be allocated to meet the greatest needs, informed by proposals from departments and the recommendations of the CEP.

Overall coordination and communication around the plan will be important moving forward. President Biddy Martin confirmed that administrative responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the Strategic Plan now lies with the chief of staff, who indicated that structures for monitoring progress are being established to facilitate regular reporting to the Board of Trustees and other campus constituencies. In addition, some pieces of the Strategic Plan formerly shepherded by the provost have been directed to other areas of the college. For example, the newly established Office of Diversity and Inclusion now handles a broad array of work previously situated in the provost’s office. The college is poised to continue to develop mechanisms for coordinating cross-campus engagement, communication, and assessment as the Strategic Plan comes to life.

Amherst is positioned to align existing and new mechanisms with meaningful data and clear measures of progress, for, as the self-study document notes, “... the need to evaluate progress and impact will grow” as implementation moves forward. The recently reorganized Office of Institutional Research and Registrar Services (OIRRS) is well poised to lend critical support in this regard to a variety of planning activities across the college. The team focused its review on examples of institutional research that have emerged since the last CIHE-NEASC action in 2013 and found ample evidence that quality data in a variety of formats are widely available to support both academic and administrative planning.

For example, analyses of course enrollment patterns have enabled the Ad Hoc Curriculum Committee to consider important questions about students’ breadth of study to inform the college’s ongoing review of its open curriculum. These findings suggest that, in general, students from many different majors are indeed engaging in a broad range of curricular offerings, though pockets of underrepresentation by certain groups in some areas are evident (i.e., fewer Asian and international students enrolling in the humanities; somewhat fewer black and Latino students enrolling in STEM and economics). In another example, results from a suite of Consortium on Financing Higher Education (COFHE) surveys corroborate the voices of students who have raised concerns about campus climate and have helped to focus a campus conversation around strengthening a sense of community and improving the quality of social/residential life on campus. With a combined total of seven FTEs across registrar and IR functions, the OIRRS has become a vital resource with the capacity to support many threads of inquiry across campus.

A key opportunity for growth will be leveraging the institution’s analytic resources in ways that connect more deeply with the work of the college to shape meaningful action with demonstrable impact on its strategic priorities (see “Evaluation,” below).

Planning: The 2015 SPAC is a signature example of Amherst’s capacity for long-range planning that establishes a clear set of institutional priorities amidst a shifting landscape for liberal arts colleges. The strategic direction established by the 2015 plan is aligned with and linked to the fundraising priorities announced with the public launch of the Promise Campaign in April 2018,¹ which seeks to raise \$625 million to support financial aid, the vitality of the faculty, and the college’s continuing innovation within the finest tradition of the liberal arts.

Improvements in Amherst’s approach to financial planning should substantially increase the college’s capacity to achieve its strategic aims. For example, the college restructured the finance office and changed the CFO’s responsibilities. Emphasis was placed on hiring new staff—four positions, including the position of CFO (the “treasurer” title was dropped and the position was later renamed “chief financial and administrative officer” [CFAO]). This new configuration of roles, skills, and experience now benefits several multi-constituency committees and groups across campus. The team engages campus stakeholders around budget trends and priorities. A modern, more nimble reporting architecture is more efficient and effective, resulting in an improved annual budget process with greater transparency in resource allocation, enhanced analyses of changes in student financial-aid needs, and a new restructured debt portfolio, among other actions taken to achieve objectives consistent with planning priorities.

Amherst is moving deliberately to reimagine and revitalize student affairs, which is viewed by college leadership as essential to supporting an increasingly diverse community. The Office of Student Affairs has undertaken the systematic review of many of its programs and offices, and actively sought the consultation of outside experts, most notably in the areas of health services and the reorganization of student life. Recent enhancements include the establishment of a case management system, expanded hours at the health center, and experimentation with a new residential model. This revitalization effort is poised to continue with the recent appointment of a new chief student affairs officer.

The Campus Framework Plan (May 2017) is a flexible tool designed to help the college navigate options and constraints for campus growth in the coming decades. It “seeks to capture the unique sense of place and identity of the campus and express the campus community’s shared vision for its future, including how the physical design of the campus serves the college’s mission and academic objectives.” The Campus Framework Plan was informed by interviews with a full array of campus stakeholders and by a number of studies, including analyses of underperforming buildings, space utilization, energy efficiency, parking demand and supply, and so on. It is tightly aligned with the goals of the 2015 Strategic Plan. At the time of the review team’s visit, the new science center—a central component of Phase 1 of the Campus Framework Plan—was nearing its final stages, and interviews with faculty members suggest this new space is viewed as an important improvement with the potential to shape research, teaching, and learning in vital ways. Open spaces have been integrated into the design of the building to encourage collaboration and cross-disciplinary fertilization, and these spaces will be available to campus and community groups to further Amherst’s goal of enhancing student social life. One faculty member noted that the process of bringing this building to fruition has brought faculty out of their individual departments and into broader dialogue about the sciences and the campus as a whole.

¹ <https://www.amherst.edu/give/news-events/amherst-college-s-promise-the-campaign-for-amherst-s-third-century-launches-publicly-with-100-million-anonymous-gift>

The examples above illustrate Amherst's capacity to effect broad, encompassing change in response to planning for current and future needs in major areas of the college (finance, student affairs, facilities) and in support of a "rigorous liberal arts education that embraces the challenges of the 21st century" (2015 SPAC).

Evaluation: Amherst is earnest in its self-reflection. Numerous committees, processes, and rituals reflect a high degree of engagement by stakeholders, whose careful study of campus issues contributes to an active culture of deliberation. Much of this deliberation is focused on enhancing the student experience, and rich data from a variety of sources are provided in support of these activities. While the team found plenty of cases that spoke to Amherst's capacity to effect change through broad-based, data-informed planning and evaluation, it was not always clear how deliberation would translate into action, or how progress would be tracked and assessed over time.

The 2012 report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Advising articulated a compelling approach to advising as an essential pedagogical responsibility of every faculty member, and highlighted several disconnects between the institution's rhetoric about the importance of advising in an open curriculum on the one hand and the actual experience of students with advising on the other. About 25 percent of students reported having three or more advisors in their first two years, limiting their ability to form the kind of relationships that would facilitate meaningful reflection about academic goals, and many students reported spending very little time with their pre-major advisor(s). The ad hoc committee also identified inequities in the distribution of the pre-major advising load among faculty. The report of the ad hoc committee was informed, in part, by a two-year pilot program (2008–2010) that matched fifteen faculty members with one advisee each and structured their interactions around frequent, in-depth meetings about students' learning goals as the basis for course selection. Focus groups conducted by the OIRRS found that students in the pilot program valued the relationship they formed with their advisors over multiple, in-depth meetings and the chance to discuss their learning goals. These results, coupled with other institutional, survey, and peer data, informed a set of recommended changes that have become the basis of protracted faculty deliberation.

The 2012 recommendations were taken up by the Ad Hoc Curriculum Committee between 2015 and 2017, and a broader discussion with the faculty was slated for spring 2018. The faculty response to some aspects of the ad hoc committee's report ranged from unsupportive, to uneasy, to skeptical, while faculty were more positive about proposals to cap the number of advisees, limit discontinuity in matching students with pre-major advisors, and rethink the first-year advising experience during orientation. Efforts are under way to offer intensive advising geared toward first-generation, low-income students. Although these are very positive steps, it was less clear what steps faculty themselves are taking in support of a reinvigorated advising model, or how the success of these efforts may ultimately be determined. So far, the considerably extended period of faculty reflection and experimentation (2008–2018) has yielded important but relatively modest changes, including a revision to the advising manual in 2017 and a mentoring program for new faculty advisors.² If the goal of these deliberations is an advising system that helps students to "confront the meaning of his or her education," it will be helpful to clarify the

² https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/dean_faculty/newfaculty/advising

ultimate indicators of success in this initiative, and to detail how these will be captured and communicated as faculty experimentation and deliberation continue.

Similarly, it is not always clear how the results of evaluation activities are being put to use in service of strengthening the student experience and institutional effectiveness. The Ad Hoc Curriculum Committee reports it reviewed “reams of data” on course-taking patterns, for example, and this review appears to have provided some assurances that students by and large are engaging with a broad range of Amherst’s open curriculum. However, it does not appear that the considerable volumes of data on students’ curricular experiences have yielded a clear focus or points of action. These gaps speak to a common challenge inherent in many evaluation and planning activities—the challenge of moving from the collection, analysis, and dissemination of data to the meaningful “sense-making” of that data to inform institutional practice.

Finally, the review team took positive note of the “outcome and action updates,” from spring 2017, prepared by each academic division as faculty work to implement various components of the Strategic Plan. These updates list specific actions, milestones, and timelines in support of each strategic goal. For example, strategic updates from both the dean of the faculty and the chief diversity and inclusion officer note progress on strategic goal 2.1: “... to recruit, develop, and retain a talented and diverse faculty who will offer one of the finest liberal arts educations in the world.” Embedded in these updates are helpful details about the status of work to ensure that faculty applicant pools are diverse, compensation packages are competitive, and substantive professional-development opportunities are provided to promote faculty leadership and strengthen governance. In some instances, these reports include data that help to calibrate progress. The Diversity and Inclusion Report, for example, notes that, as of spring 2017, six out of 16 new tenure-line faculty are faculty of color. These reports will be a valuable source of information that can be synthesized across divisions and communicated in a way that will help the college sustain forward momentum and buy-in, identify challenges and opportunities along the way, and facilitate understanding of institutional progress. The college is positioned to extend this work by identifying key indicators of progress that can be consistently monitored and included in this communication and reporting around strategic priorities.

Standard 3: Organization and Governance

Amherst is a singularly close-knit, engaged, and mission-driven institution. Its governance is marked by uniformly high expectations for participation on the part of all constituencies and by impressive transparency. Governance structures reflect and support the fundamental purposes of a highly personal, academic, and diverse liberal arts college. The current organization of the college is shaped both by long-standing traditions (such as a tradition of active faculty leadership in virtually all areas of college life) and by thoughtful adaptation to the more diverse community that Amherst has become in recent years. The college’s administrative capacity has expanded and strengthened since Amherst’s last reaccreditation. The self-study acknowledges the complexity of expanding and professionalizing the administration within an institutional culture marked by the faculty’s suspicion of “administration creep.” While the team heard echoes of that wariness during its visit, clear assent to the premise that the college urgently needs to upgrade its administrative capacity (especially in areas such as student life, diversity and inclusion, compliance, and health services) was also heard. The team hopes that the conversations with faculty about this issue will continue and will lead to a shared understanding.

All governance materials reviewed (including the college's bylaws, the Faculty Handbook, and the Staff Handbook) indicate a clear and consistent understanding of the distinct roles of the Board of Trustees, the administration, and the faculty. The self-study's assertion that "vigorous commitment to shared governance is a hallmark of the college" was confirmed by all conversations during the team's visit.

Governing Board: The board has the expertise, the deep understanding of the college's mission, and the commitment to the college's interests to guide the institution in a highly effective way. Though its membership has recently been expanded, it remains (at twenty-five members) a relatively small board, marked by a highly personal style. Its composition is not as diverse, especially in respect to gender, as one might expect. However, efforts are under way to increase representativeness. All members of the board, including the chair, are free from personal or financial interest in the institution and are able to fulfill their responsibilities as fiduciaries. New members receive a one-day orientation.

The board regularly reviews its own effectiveness and integrity of operations. It appoints the president and reviews the president's performance on an annual basis. It also meets annually with several faculty committees to assess the performance of the administration.

In addition to the campus itself, the college administers two other institutions: the Folger Shakespeare Library, in Washington, D.C., and the Emily Dickinson Museum, in Amherst. The board has responsibility over the financial assets of both institutions but has delegated other aspects of oversight to separate boards for the library and the museum. There are many close connections between the college and these two entities; the college's board meets regularly with the Folger board while two college trustees sit on the Emily Dickinson board, and senior officers of the college and faculty members play important roles at each institution.

The team took note of some impressive strengths in the board's interaction with the campus. In particular, the regular face-to-face meetings between the board and key governance committees (including the Committee of Six, the Committee on Educational Policy [CEP], and the Committee on Priorities and Resources [CPR]) are commended. These meetings provide for two-way communication, enabling each side to share perspectives with the other. This practice has the potential to create levels of familiarity and trust between trustees and faculty (and students) that are rarely seen at peer institutions. Our conversations with community members suggest that the practice generally fulfills this potential.

The structure of board committees is traditional, with most committees focusing on a distinct operational area (budget and finance, buildings and grounds, human resources, advancement, instruction, student life). The team did find that the bylaws pay particularly heavy attention to the roles of the chief financial and administrative officer and the controller, and do not mention the dean of the faculty or any other senior leadership role.

Internal Governance: The senior leadership of the college consists of the president and her senior staff. All members of senior staff (including the chief academic officer, the dean of the faculty) report to the president. In recent years, President Martin has added a number of new

appointees to senior staff—the chief of campus operations, the chief policy officer and general counsel, the chief information officer, the chief diversity and inclusion officer, and the chief communications officer. These new appointments are directly tied to priorities in the Strategic Plan. During the visit, the team heard some concern about turnover in the senior staff ranks as well as consistent suggestions that the concept and the membership of senior staff could be better known on campus. The senior staff is well aware of this concern and has taken steps to address it, for example through a program of Open Conversations with various members of the group.

For a relatively brief period (2013–2015), the senior administration included a newly created provost’s office. The incumbent of that office was charged with oversight of planning efforts across campus and directing initiatives in the areas of diversity and inclusion, globalization, and student learning. After two years of this “experiment,” the president discontinued it and redistributed the responsibilities of the provost’s office to other offices. The feedback heard during the visit suggests that the decision has been broadly welcomed on campus and that the college’s planning capacity remains robust.

The president and senior staff work in close coordination with the faculty. The faculty’s active involvement in governance is, even by the standards of small liberal arts colleges, striking. Tenured and tenure-eligible faculty members are required to attend all faculty meetings and to participate in a large number of standing and ad hoc committees, by which the faculty enact their responsibility for the curriculum, and educational programs and policies. At the heart of this elaborate ecosystem is the Committee of Six, which combines the functions of a faculty appointments committee with those of a powerful faculty executive committee. Other important committees include the CEP, which makes recommendations to the administration about the allocation of tenure-track lines and oversees the college’s educational policies, and the CPR, which ensures that faculty and other constituencies provide substantial input on the budget process and the setting of financial priorities more broadly.

In many respects, Amherst’s shared governance structure remains exemplary. The fact that the college can credibly require faculty attendance at faculty meetings suggests a culture in which service to the institution is not eclipsed by professional or externally focused commitments. The team notes with admiration the abundant evidence of the faculty’s commitment to educating itself about all significant issues confronting the college. This makes the faculty a constructive partner to the administration to a degree that is distinctive. Equally admirable is the ethos of transparency, which is manifested in the practice of posting extensive committee minutes on the website of the dean of the faculty. This same transparency is also apparent on the administrative side: for example, the website of the Employee Council, a body representing non-faculty employees. All the committee minutes reviewed—both of faculty committees and of mixed-constituency committees—suggested a very thoughtful evidence-driven approach to decision-making across all domains, as well as decision-making keyed to the college’s Strategic Plan.

Admirable as this system is, there are signs of stress within it. Two surveys of faculty opinion conducted by COACHE highlight fairly widespread dissatisfaction with the service burden experienced by faculty. In the 2017 survey, 38 percent of faculty cited “too much service” as one of the worst aspects of working at the college—by far the most common response to that survey question. Recently tenured associate professors have expressed particular concern about the

weight of service. It is not clear that a one-year “service sabbatical” that has been proposed will be enough to address the issue. At a point in the college’s history when it is striving both to achieve greater diversity within its faculty and to be more attentive to work-life balance, it seems problematic to schedule faculty meetings at 7:30 in the evening. This concern has been raised by large numbers of faculty, and the timing of meetings is being reconsidered as part of a comprehensive review of the course schedule. Characteristically methodical and thoughtful as this approach is, it is surprising that there is not a greater sense of urgency to amend a practice that seems misaligned with the realities of the contemporary workplace.

In a number of other areas, Amherst is considering or has already made changes that shift its governance model in directions that make it less idiosyncratic. One such example is the recent decision to compensate, with stipends, course releases or leave time, the chairs of academic departments and programs. While we understand the concern expressed by some that compensating chairs will erode a traditional culture of general participation in department governance, the college’s efforts to establish a norm of three-year chair terms and to provide chairs with the support and incentives to tackle, in a professional manner, the increasingly complex tasks of leading a department or program are commended. The introduction of monthly chairs meetings has the potential not just to offer a more efficient model for coordinating the work of academic departments and programs but also to add a new forum for soliciting faculty input and for cross-departmental discussion. Although it is too soon to know how much impact this innovation will have, early indications seem encouraging. The team also commends the college’s flexibility in recognizing that the responsibilities delegated to members of the Committee of Six justify a course release. The self-study describes regular conversations about the possibility of dividing this committee into two: an appointments committee and an executive committee. Given the already large number of tenure-track faculty and the likelihood of significant additional hiring in the near future, it seems appropriate to pay close attention to the committee’s workload, if not its charge, in the years ahead.

Faculty workload in a broader sense has been a particular concern of the college’s leadership over recent years. Enrollment pressures in some STEM fields and advising and service demands across all fields have led the president and the Board of Trustees to acknowledge the desirability of expanding the tenure-eligible faculty once funds have been raised to do so. The recent formation of a Consultative Group for Untenured Faculty and more support for department and program chairs are indispensable early steps in addressing this issue, especially concerning junior faculty. However, the COACHE surveys and recent summaries of untenured faculty concerns highlight the need for continuing attention to the mentoring of new faculty, retention challenges, standards and expectations for tenure, and an institutional culture that some new faculty find difficult.

Students and administrative staff also have a significant voice in the governance of the college. Students serve on many important committees, including the CEP, the CPR, and the College Council. Their input in these committees has weight, and their participation is generally judged to be meaningful. At the same time, the team heard a consistent message that communication between student representatives and the broader student body could be enhanced. The college and the student government are therefore encouraged to explore options for improving such communication. Staff members also serve on these standing committees and, in addition, are

represented on an Employee Council, which has played a more visible role in recent years. In terms of the overall role of administrative staff within the institution, the picture is mixed. That “staff and administrators” are specifically mentioned in the college’s mission statement indicates institutional recognition of their essential contributions. At the same time, as a fall 2017 staff survey underscored, there have been persistent concerns about staff feeling under-recognized and under-informed. The senior staff is working on a number of initiatives to address problems relating to training and professional development, recognition, and communication.

Amherst’s approach to institutional change is strikingly consistent in every domain: patient, reasoned, consultative, respectful, and methodical. This approach has enabled the college to adjust to major changes in the composition of its community in ways that both preserve the institution’s distinctiveness and move it forward into a new era. The coherence of the college’s change management strategy is impressive. Though there would be no reason for Amherst to depart fundamentally from this highly effective approach, the college could also learn from listening carefully to the voices of those for whom the pace of change is too slow.

Standard 4: The Academic Program

Amherst’s academic program offers students an “open curriculum,” which provides students with great flexibility—as well as significant responsibility—for developing their own program of study. This policy reflects Amherst’s mission that “undergraduates assume substantial responsibility for undertaking inquiry and for shaping their education within and beyond the curriculum.” The graduation requirements for the A.B. are limited to (1) completing a minimum of thirty-one full-semester courses, at least sixteen of them at Amherst; (2) completing a first-year seminar if students enroll as first-years; and (3) completing the requirements for at least one major. A review of the departmental learning goals indicates that each of the majors except physics and astronomy has learning outcomes that are in place and published.

The open curriculum has been in place since 1971. Although faculty indicated that every few years there is new discussion of whether Amherst should institute some additional requirements, the consensus among faculty and students is that the open curriculum is a beloved hallmark of the college, with many referring to it as Amherst’s “calling card.”

Given the level of freedom granted to students by the open curriculum, academic advising is particularly important at Amherst. Tenure-line faculty are responsible for advising, which is viewed as a pedagogical responsibility, and all faculty serve as advisors after completing their first year at Amherst. Various committees over the past five years, including an Ad Hoc Committee on Advising, as well as the Ad Hoc Curriculum Committee, have developed recommendations to improve the advising experience for faculty and students (see Standard 2: Planning and Evaluation).

Amherst requires every student who enrolls as a first-year student to complete a first-year seminar. One of the recommendations that came out of Amherst’s 2008 review was to clarify the purposes of the first-year seminar program. In 2009, the faculty approved a new policy to require that all first-year seminars include substantial “writing-attentive” instruction. These courses now focus on students’ abilities to write, read texts and materials closely, and develop arguments. A

spring 2017 survey showed that students were “more positive about the attention given to their writing” than students had expressed previously. The first-year seminar is the only common educational experience of the student body. With the open curriculum and a particularly diverse student body that appears to have some significant cultural divides, many faculty seemed to believe that this common educational experience was especially important.

Assuring Academic Quality: There have been some changes in the majors and certificates since the last review, demonstrating robust curricular and faculty FTE review and renewal. Amherst established seven new majors since 2008, and the CEP approved five new Five College certificates. An area that Amherst has recently identified as in need of enhancement within the curriculum is the history, politics, and culture of the African continent. An external review that is scheduled to take place in winter 2019 will help future planning to ensure this area is covered more fully in the curriculum.

Academic departments go through an external review process approximately every ten years. Each review includes a self-study, which is reviewed by the president, the dean of the faculty, and the CEP. Twenty-eight departments went through an external review process during the past ten years. External reviews often lead to curricular and faculty FTE changes. For example, following a fall 2015 review, the Spanish department hired a senior scholar of Latin American culture and a specialist in Spanish language acquisition at the professorial level. Additionally, a search is under way for an FTE in LatinX cultural studies.

Beyond the academic planning and evaluation that takes place on a regular basis at the departmental level, Amherst engaged in a comprehensive planning process at the institutional level between 2013 and 2015 to develop the college’s Strategic Plan. The plan has provided an overarching guide for planning and evaluation for the coming decade.

Authority for the curriculum is delegated to the faculty, subject to agreement of the president. Faculty assume significant responsibility for academic oversight via the Committee of Six, the CEP, the Ad Hoc Curriculum Committee, various other standing and ad hoc committees, and obligatory faculty meetings. Every new or revised course is reviewed by the CEP to ensure that the course meets for the appropriate amount of time, that it fits well into the overall curriculum, and that course descriptions are written in model language. Each course is then approved by a faculty vote. Each year, approximately 175 to 200 new and revised courses go through this approval process, demonstrating a high level of curricular innovation.

The self-study notes some concerns about course access in the sciences. While Amherst has an enviable overall 8:1 student-to-faculty ratio, small class sizes are not currently possible in some of the sciences, which have experienced significant enrollment increases over recent years. The CEP has expressed concern about course access across other areas of the curriculum as well. In response to these concerns, a pilot program added new rules for how faculty members cap enrollments and finalize rosters for individual courses. These first steps may lead to additional solutions with a commitment to continual monitoring and improvement.

In addition, the number of students completing a thesis has declined since the last review, with 51 percent completing a thesis in 2007 and 39 percent completing a thesis in 2017. Some

initiatives are currently under way to encourage more students to pursue a thesis, including building more research opportunities into lower-level courses.

Some departments have experienced fluctuations in the number of their majors and size of their course enrollments over the past ten years, especially in mathematics, the arts and foreign languages.

Finally, Amherst encourages students to study away at some point during their undergraduate career, though the number of students doing so is lower than at peer institutions. Amherst is currently engaged in developing new opportunities for students to gain international experience over the summer, increasing the number of faculty-led research trips during breaks, and developing some new exchange programs with select international partners.

Undergraduate Degree Programs: The academic coherence of the open curriculum is derived from the requirements within each major, the guidance of the faculty advisor, and the level of rigor across the curriculum. Although faculty expressed commitment to the open curriculum, some favor one or two additional common educational experiences aimed at helping an increasingly diverse student body to bond more.

General Education: While there are no specific general-education requirements under the open curriculum plan, Amherst has strategies to encourage students to take courses across the curriculum. For example, a “keywords” initiative encourages faculty to attach keywords to their courses to highlight course content and capacities. Students and faculty said the keywords are used regularly by students to discover and locate broadly diverse courses across the curriculum. Over the past five years, 99 percent of graduates took three or more courses in the arts and humanities; 74.8 percent of graduates took three or more courses in the social sciences; and 67 percent of graduates took three or more courses in STEM areas.

Academic programs benefit from access to and collaboration with Amherst’s museums and collections. The Folger Shakespeare Library, in Washington, D.C., awards fellowships each year to six students, allowing them to conduct research at the library in January. The Amherst Center for Russian Culture is described as “poised to open its collections more fully and to create more opportunities for researchers and students.” All the collections and museums provide opportunities to enhance the undergraduate experience. Over the past decade, each has expanded instructional programs and increased connections to students, faculty, and the curriculum.

The Major: Each student declares a major by the end of the sophomore year. Majors require the completion of eight to fourteen courses, as well as completion of a capstone requirement, among them comprehensive exams. Students may graduate with one, two, or, occasionally, three majors (though the Ad Hoc Curriculum Committee has recently proposed the elimination of the third-major option. Faculty recently discussed and rejected the curriculum committee’s proposal to add a minor option). Students may propose an interdisciplinary major or plan their own studies as an independent scholar.

Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit: The Amherst College baccalaureate degree program consists of a minimum of thirty-one full-semester courses, at least sixteen of them at Amherst.

All full-semester courses at Amherst carry equal weight, and each is the equivalent of four credit hours, so students should complete the degree with at least 128 credit hours (though the minimum required for the A.B. degree, if a student drops one course, is 124 credit hours).

When the CEP reviewed the college's credit system in 2015–2016, it set the requirement that all courses meet a standard of twelve hours of academic engagement each week. A number of courses that used to meet once a week for two hours have changed since then to meet in person for two and a half or three hours. For most courses, the standard is met with three hours spent in class, plus an additional nine hours of work outside of class each week. During the approval process for new courses, if a proposed course meets for fewer than three hours, the CEP requires an explanation of how the course will meet the twelve-hours-per-week standard. Amherst does offer some half-credit courses in the curriculum, though a maximum of four half-credit courses may be applied toward the degree, and two half-credit courses must be in the same subject area in order to be credited as the equivalent of one full credit toward the degree. There is currently discussion of a proposal to offer half-credit science labs, because they often require students to do more work than the equivalent of a one-credit course.

A review of diverse syllabi from courses across the curriculum supports the conclusion that Amherst's credit-hour requirements are in line with the expectations of the federal credit hour. Discussions with faculty showed that the credit-hour expectations are understood, and some have found that the focus over the past few years on the credit hour has led to a positive feedback loop with students regarding the amount of time students spend on their work in each class.

Standard 5: Students

Admissions and Financial Aid: All admissions and financial aid programs appear consistent with the college's mission, as well as applicable federal, state, and local law. Admissions and retention policies as well as financial aid options are clear and available to all students and prospective students online.

Amherst has an exceptional student body. Annually, the college enrolls a residential student body of approximately 1,800 students of which 50.5 percent are male and 49.5 percent are female. An additional one hundred Amherst students typically are off campus studying away each year. Over the past decade, admissions selectivity and the diversity of the student body have increased. Beyond the dedication of financial resources, success in this regard has required the deep and sustained commitment of all members of the college community. Results have been remarkable. The college's acceptance rate is 14 percent, and the retention rate for first-year students is 96 percent. The six-year graduate rate is 94 percent. The college should be commended on its efforts to widen educational access and opportunity for a diverse student body. Forty-four percent of students self-identify as students of color, and 14 percent of students are the first in their family to attend college. The percentage of enrolled non-U.S. citizens is 9 percent, a slight increase over a decade ago.

In addition, generous financial aid policies have been introduced and have been sustained, even in the face of the financial crisis of 2007–2008. Approximately 58 percent of students receive financial aid. Amherst is among the very few institutions in higher education that is need-blind

without “packaged” loans. In addition, every student who is offered financial aid is provided with a financial aid disclosure that includes information about the repayment rate, the median borrowing of students, and links to federal aid resources.

To expand access, the college has worked to reduce the financial barriers associated with the application process for low-income students. In 2016, application fee-waivers were given to all first-generation students with household incomes below \$65,000. The same year, the college also modified its testing requirements to reduce the number of testing hurdles for low-income students. Amherst now requires first-year applicants to submit only an ACT score or the SAT1. AP scores and subject tests are optional.

Amherst has initiated a number of additional efforts to recruit a more diverse student body, including hosting diversity open houses for high-school students, implementing programming to support recruitment of talented low-income students, and establishing scholarship funds for veterans. Student athletes have also been a special focus as a result of data collected by the New England Small College Athletic Conference (NESCAC) in 2014, which demonstrated that varsity programs within the conference were significantly less racially and socioeconomically diverse than overall student populations. Recruitment restrictions have been lifted to encourage coaches to conduct earlier outreach to recruit historically underrepresented populations, but competition with other high-profile institutions remains acute. The income gap continues to remain a significant challenge, with repercussions for social life on campus.

The college has set aside significant academic resources to support low-income and first-generation students. For example, a summer bridge program supports students from low-resourced high schools who wish to hone their academic skills. In addition, the Writing Center and the Moss Quantitative Center have received funds to expand their outreach and services for these students. Finally, the dean of admission and financial aid has a close working relationship with faculty working with students experiencing academic difficulty. This collaboration has the added benefit of improving admissions policies and practices, which are continually evaluated. The OIRRS tracks retention and graduation rates of these populations.

The six-year graduation rate for African-American and first-generation students is only slightly lower than the overall graduation rate. Goals noted in the Strategic Plan include identifying sources of this difference and finding ways to shrink this relatively small gap.

Student Services and Co-Curricular Experiences: Since the last comprehensive review, student affairs has become more closely aligned with the college’s mission, a result of its restructuring to address concerns articulated in the last review. A comprehensive evaluation was conducted by an external consultant hired to guide a two-year college-wide community-building effort. Consequently, policies across all service areas have been rewritten. Also, new electronic systems for record keeping and filing have systematized and streamlined case management, research, and compliance.

In addition, the college has worked on improving students’ residential and social experiences. These efforts have included the construction of new resident halls; the creation of new common spaces; and the implementation of new programming, such as neighborhood clusters that link

networks of residence halls and theme houses, drawing together students with varied interests and backgrounds from all parts of campus and from all class years. Yet, students continue to report a “lack of community” in campus social life, and they report that the neighborhood clusters initiative has not succeeded. There were also complaints about the new Greenway residence halls, noting that they did not succeed in providing adequate social spaces. The perception among students is that new initiatives, which require new resources, “appear out of nowhere” and are often poorly conceived. Senior leadership recognizes that student perceptions may be improved through more thoughtful change management going forward.

The college has also begun the work to convert its residential student staffing model from resident counselors to resident advisors, as well as to clarify the responsibilities of its live-in professional staff who now have greater responsibility for mentoring student staff and upholding community standards for social interaction. These changes fit with best practices.

The college is also in the process of linking the residential experience to the classroom through co-curricular programming. The Center for Community Engagement and the Loeb Center for Career Exploration and Planning are working together to co-create more opportunities for “learning by doing” through internships, high-impact summer programming, and community-based learning. External funding has provided students with support for developing and testing their ideas to solve problems in the local community.

New programming has been developed to support the needs of all entering students and their families, to build community during a critical juncture in students’ academic trajectories.

Professionalizing the Counseling and Health Centers has also been a major focus since the last comprehensive review. This has included changes to the centers’ service delivery models. For example, the Counseling Center now offers individual, group, and couples counseling; urgent care; psychiatric assessment and medication management; case management; and 24-hour, seven-days-a-week emergency phone counseling. The center also offers training for faculty, staff, and students who wish to develop skills for identifying and supporting students in distress. It has made progress in its efforts to diversify its staff by hiring clinicians who reflect the makeup of the student body.

In addition, the college has devoted considerable attention to Title IX compliance and the full-time Title IX compliance officer is a lawyer. The office has reorganized its judicial procedures to bring them into compliance with Office of Civil Rights standards and devoted significant resources and personnel to educational initiatives around student health, social life, and sexual life.

Amherst College should be commended for its recognition of the key role that the student affairs operation plays at liberal arts institutions in the education of the whole student. It has looked closely at the need to improve its student affairs operation through professionalization, working to balance the need for the diversity that it has assembled with the appropriate support mechanisms to ensure that all of its students succeed. Since its last review, the college has achieved success in the planning and organizational reform of its student-life programming and continual assessment will be integral as it continues to address these challenges.

Standard 6: Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship

Faculty and Academic Staff: Amherst has a dedicated, well-qualified, and engaged faculty of a size and nature consistent with its mission of “learning through close colloquy.” In an extended period of faculty renewal due to retirements, the college is building a faculty in line with its changing student body, and curricular and pedagogical innovation. Of the instructional faculty, 84 percent hold a terminal degree. Of the 188 tenured and tenure-track faculty, 85.6 percent are full-time, and the self-study reports that full-time faculty teach 85.7 percent of courses. Women constitute 48 percent of the faculty, and 18 percent of faculty identify as persons of color. The faculty’s scholarly accomplishments are evident in their CVs, in online profiles, and in the regular communications of the college. Faculty professional development is well supported by the institution through research and travel funds. In addition to a teaching load of four courses per year, faculty serve as college and major advisors and as mentors to students. Faculty continue the tradition at Amherst of vigorous participation in governance at the department and college levels. Institutional structures and practices protect and foster academic freedom for all faculty across rank and terms of appointment.

The college designates a current cap of 188 FTE tenure-line positions. It is expected that the Board of Trustees will soon raise the cap to accommodate its anticipated approval of additional tenure lines. Lecturers, senior lecturers, and athletic head coaches work in a system of renewable contracts. Lecturers and senior lecturers teach primarily in the arts, foreign languages, and mathematics and statistics. Single-course adjunct faculty are readily available due to the proximity of the Five Colleges, which is a consortium that promotes the broad educational and cultural objectives of its associated institutions: Amherst College, Mount Holyoke College, Smith College, Hampshire College, and the University of Massachusetts Amherst. The library staff has grown since 2011 to seven instructional librarians, who work with faculty to prepare research assignments and teach students. Lab instructors work in the natural sciences. The Writing Center and Moss Quantitative Center are staffed with professional instructional staff.

The college has a phased retirement program for faculty age sixty and over that is mutually beneficial to the individual and to the institution. It allows for advance planning for retirements in a way that optimizes outcomes for retiring faculty while, at the same time, stabilizing the curriculum and opening opportunities for faculty renewal. After review, the program was renewed to extend beyond its original July 2018 expiration date.

Faculty hiring is conducted through national searches. Over the past five years, the college has worked steadily to improve its search processes in order to create talented and diverse faculty applicant pools. The dean of the faculty and the chief diversity and inclusion officer meet with all search committees for faculty positions. Annual workshops for faculty address widening efforts to recruit and ways to address implicit bias in recruiting. Of the sixteen new tenure-line faculty hired during the 2016–2017 year, five were U.S. scholars of color and six were international scholars. Amherst’s record measures favorably against its own past performance as well as the results of peer institutions.

Academic departments and programs are required to submit requests for faculty tenure-line FTEs to the CEP. In its call for these, CEP specifies criteria for evaluating requests, and then makes a

ranked recommendation to the president and dean of the faculty regarding the allocation of positions.

Efforts to diversify the faculty are intensive and long-range, including the hiring of postdoctoral fellows and hiring at the senior level. Because faculty hiring is usually at the assistant professor level where procedures are well-described in the Faculty Handbook, the self-study and associated documents describe considerable faculty and administrative discussion about the process of senior hiring and, in particular, the timing of a tenure review.

Competition is stiff for talented faculty, especially faculty of color. Typically, prospects and junior faculty garner multiple offers from peer institutions. College leadership recognizes the nature of this condition and the need for increased attention to faculty members' contributions to the teaching, scholarship, and community environments, along with representational diversity.

Interviews with administration and faculty revealed an awareness of assistant professor retention challenges. Over the past three academic years, approximately thirteen untenured faculty left the college. Administrators are knowledgeable of the specifics of each case, and, while there are not readily discernible patterns, the number and rate of departures suggest that this issue requires attention and study. In the midst of efforts to diversify the faculty through hiring, retention is equally important. Whereas peer institutions often conduct exit interviews for these departures, Amherst has yet to incorporate such a process.

Faculty salaries are competitive within the college's peer group, often at the top of the range, especially for full professors. The self-study reports that during the 2016–2017 academic year, the department's first choice was hired in thirteen of fourteen tenure-line searches (the fourteenth search failed).

Institutional support for scholarship has increased over the past decade. One notable example is sabbatical leave. Tenure-track faculty, upon reappointment, are eligible for two semesters of sabbatical leave at 100 percent salary. Upon tenure, faculty receive a year of sabbatical leave, paid at 80 percent salary, with the possibility that the Senior Sabbatical Fellowship program will provide the additional funding to reach 100 percent salary. This level of support is more generous than most NESCAC colleges. In addition, the college has a "topping-up" policy for faculty who receive external fellowships, since these fellowships often provide salaries lower than salaries at Amherst.

For untenured faculty, the reappointment, tenure, and promotion processes are clearly described in the Faculty Handbook. The dean of the faculty issues clear guidelines to candidates for these performance reviews in a timely fashion, along with guidance to department chairs. For untenured faculty, there is some concern about uneven mentoring and the lack of articulation of expectations regarding teaching and scholarship needed to achieve tenure. Untenured faculty expressed concern that tenured faculty are not sufficiently sensitive to the feelings of vulnerability that exist among the college's untenured faculty.

The dean of the faculty is aware of the need to clarify the expectations for receiving tenure and is working with department chairs to develop new statements for the Faculty Handbook. This

process will also involve the Committee of Six and the untenured faculty. The full faculty will need to approve any changes.

In addition, the untenured faculty have requested a more standardized approach to teaching evaluations. Amherst does not currently use a common college-wide teaching evaluation form and has only recently moved to a system where all tenure-line faculty must solicit student course evaluations. By vote of the faculty, teaching evaluations are now conducted in every course taught by tenured faculty, as has been the case for untenured faculty. Presently, the design of teaching evaluations for untenured faculty is controlled by departments, and while some departments use a common form for all untenured faculty, in other departments junior faculty are permitted to write their own evaluation questions. This lack of uniformity is of concern to the untenured faculty, and potentially could raise questions about equitable treatment and is vulnerable to implicit bias. In discussions with faculty, the tradition of narrative evaluations and a dislike of quantitative response were raised as hurdles to a common form. Yet a common form and method of course evaluations need not sacrifice narrative response.

The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) is currently conducting a pilot project for a common course evaluation form. Approximately thirty faculty are participating voluntarily. The CTL process is comprehensive, including the construction of the survey instrument to the reporting of the data. Members of the visiting team were impressed with the pilot effort, although concerned that this consequential task should not be the sole responsibility of the CTL.

Faculty workload was a concern and point of focus in the Interim Report, and the college has devoted considerable attention to and reflection on this area since then. As noted above, the service responsibilities of Amherst faculty are considerable. The 2017–2018 academic year was the first when department and program chairs received compensation, and a parallel effort is under way to regularize chair terms and standardize responsibilities and expectations. Department and program chairs now attend a mandatory monthly meeting that is used to share best practices and information related to the responsibilities of their role, as well as to engage in conversation about college-wide issues. In particular, department chairs have increased efforts to assure that tenure-track faculty are properly mentored. Continuing this effort and carefully monitoring the success of these initiatives related to faculty workload will be important.

Teaching and Learning: Amherst fosters a strong culture of collaboration and collegiality. The environment for teaching and learning is one in which innovation is encouraged and supported. The team took notice of high interest in and intentional support of interdisciplinary projects and programs. Alumni surveys reveal strongly positive feedback on the academic experience.

There is strong support for the college's now close-to-fifty-year-old commitment to an open curriculum and the continual self-reflection about the academic program, with the only requirement being the first-year seminar. The Center for Teaching and Learning is essential to pedagogical innovation and support. The creation of a center emerged as a priority in the strategic planning process and became fully operational in fall 2017. Informed by the pilot program to develop a common course evaluation, the CTL director is actively engaged in consultations with faculty on pedagogy and course design. A second important addition to

pedagogical and curricular innovation is the externally funded Commons grant, intended to spur curricular and pedagogical innovation at the department level.

The Moss Quantitative Center is sufficiently staffed, including with student workers, to provide support to STEM and economics courses. The Writing Center is similarly staffed.

A review of syllabi reveals that content and methods of instruction meet generally accepted academic and professional standards and expectations, and there is a clear articulation of learning goals. Within departments, there is robust exchange to develop shared understandings of what and how students learn. In its review of course proposals, the CEP oversees this collective understanding.

Students are engaged in the research and scholarship activities of the college through working with faculty, both generally and especially in their capstone and senior thesis work.

Amherst collaborates with Hampshire, Mount Holyoke, Smith, and the University of Massachusetts-Amherst through the Five Colleges Incorporated (FCI). The collaboration is well established and enjoys the support of faculty and staff. For faculty, consortium benefits include joint appointments, shared residencies, and ongoing initiatives in blended learning and digital humanities. As part of Amherst's academic program, there are two Five College departments (astronomy and dance) and, in addition, several majors. The expanded capacity to provide language instruction is particularly notable.

The college anticipates expanding the faculty in STEM and in economics based on growth in student demand, while also continuing its support and enrichment of the humanities. This expansion and continued support are conditional on fundraising. Along with expansion, projections include further diversification of the faculty. Based on current performance, continued development of the CTL and its collaborations with the Moss Center appear to be on track.

The system of academic advising is addressed elsewhere in this report (see Standard 4: The Academic Program).

Standard 7: Institutional Resources

By any financial higher-education metric, and by any comparable data for liberal arts colleges, the resources that support the academic mission of Amherst are substantial. The overall institutional resources are sufficient to sustain the achievement of its educational objectives and to further institutional improvement of its education, research, and other programs now and in the near future. The institution demonstrates through verifiable internal and external factors its capacity to admit, support, and graduate the students it seeks to serve. Amherst administers its financial resources, employs sufficient and qualified personnel, and maintains its physical and technological resources with integrity.

Human Resources: Amherst is comprised of 891 full-time and fifty-eight part-time staff. Instructional staff account for 221 of the full time and twenty-four of the part time staff. A

priority identified in the Strategic Plan was professionalizing the office of human resources in order to support all faculty and staff. Utilizing management consultants, the HR office recently completed an “outside review” that is helping it to expand services; modernize HR policies and programs for the purpose of strengthening the hiring process; improve retention of and support for a dedicated, talented, and diverse staff; and transition operations practices from primarily paper-based transactions to technology-based transactions. A new compensation program and changes to benefits programs to assure equity have been completed. The results of a recently completed staff climate survey have just been distributed to departments and are being widely discussed across campus. In recent years, the hiring of new staff has helped to provide badly needed services, particularly in the student life and health services areas.

Financial Resources: Financial resources to support Amherst’s mission have increased significantly since the previous reaccreditation. With an endowment approaching \$2.3 billion, the college is positioned to remain a leader in delivering an excellent liberal arts education. Over the past several years, in the context of college-wide strategic planning and more specific strategic financial plans, the college has taken a number of steps to understand more fully and strengthen their financial model, to identify initiatives for strengthening the endowment, to more carefully manage endowment spending to assure intergenerational equity, and to build a more transparent and rigorous budgeting process. It has recruited new finance staff with extensive financial planning skills and experience, and created a well-functioning senior finance team.

Over the past ten years, the college’s endowment has grown from \$1.3 billion to approximately \$2.3 billion. During this period, the average annual endowment return was 5.6 percent. The endowment growth resulted from close attention to asset allocation, manager selection and monitoring, and approval of spending by the Board of Trustees’ Investment Committee with final approval of the full board. During this ten-year period, spending from the endowment to support the college’s operating budget increased from about one-third to one-half of the total operating budget. In fiscal year 2018, Amherst plans to spend \$98 million from its endowment in support of the operating budget. Over the past ten years, Amherst’s endowment spending rate has moved slightly upward but remained within the board-set target spending rate of 3.5 to 5 percent. The endowment spending rate for the current year is 4.6 percent.

The strategic planning process has served as a useful tool for rethinking financial planning. The restructured Finance Office has moved quickly to launch work on Priority 6 of the Strategic Plan: “Developing bold and exemplary approaches to financial, environmental, and institutional sustainability.” Finance staff are engaging the community in discussions of Amherst’s financial model, including the core financial principles, the challenges of financial access and cost, endowment management, net tuition revenue, philanthropy, and balance sheet management. Their work has resulted in an improved annual budget process with greater transparency in resource allocation, better assessment of the financial impact of endowment fluctuations due to market growth and downturns, enhanced analyses of changes in student financial aid needs, a restructured debt portfolio, and other actions taken to achieve objectives consistent with planning priorities. Clearly, the college has ensured the integrity of its finances through careful financial management, appropriate resource allocation, and timely financial reporting both internally and externally. PWC, the college’s external auditors, awarded the college an unqualified opinion for the financial statements dated June 30, 2017. Amherst’s credit ratings are AAA (Moody’s) and AA+ (Standard and Poor’s).

Since 2013, the college's annual operating budget has grown from \$140 million to \$190 million. The CPR, which plays an important role in discussing issues concerning the development of the budget, has moved toward a greater use of data for making more informed recommendations. This committee exemplifies transparent communication in its work. Similarly, in collaboration with the Division of Campus Operations, finance staff members have developed a successful capital project process.

The student body has grown by 10 percent over the past ten years, and the number of applications has increased substantially. Admissions is need blind, and approximately 56 percent of students receive financial aid. The average grant package is \$51,000. Amherst's support for its extensive financial aid program is a widely held institutional value.

Amherst's board, president, senior leadership, and advancement staff launched a comprehensive capital campaign in April 2018 with a goal of \$625 million—with \$333 million already raised.

Information, Physical, and Technological Resources: The college has already made progress in meeting Priority 6 of the Strategic Plan by using a new Campus Framework Plan to guide decisions about the priority siting and design of new facilities and renovation projects. It has made environmental sustainability and achieving a carbon neutral footprint a key component of the college's way of life. The visiting team met with many staff who provide support for teaching and learning environments.

In information technology, new leadership is emphasizing improvements in several areas, including service orientation and responsiveness, enhanced support for curriculum initiatives, increased rigor in IT processes, and initiatives focused on IT staff morale. With the support of IT management consultants, the division and the college as a whole have been addressing business process review and improved capabilities for delivering data to a community that is starved for better and more timely data. Looking forward, IT will focus on replacing and improving the institution's core business systems and data governance policies and practices, and many elements of the college's IT infrastructure.

Amherst's physical facilities are impressive, and the college has ambitious plans and construction under way for new buildings to better support an Amherst education. A new \$240 million science center is under construction on a site that will transform a formerly less attractive part of campus. Over the past ten years, through a constant stream of large renovation projects, Amherst has increased its NAV (net asset value, a measure of the maintenance needs for buildings) from 71 percent to about 90 percent. This remarkable achievement has addressed maintenance as well as programmatic needs across campus. In addition, through careful budgeting, the college is increasing funds for ongoing maintenance. The intent is that, through implementation of renewal cycles for buildings, it will also be able to lower utility costs, save energy, and better support the enterprise of each facility on campus. Further, the college has recently collaborated with other academic institutions on the construction of a 20 MW solar PPA in Farmington, Maine, that will generate renewable electricity and replace all of the college's

carbon-intensive grid sourced electricity. The college is also engaged in moving forward with a climate action planning process and is making plans to begin a green revolving fund.

Standard 8: Educational Effectiveness

Organizational Structures for Student Learning and Outcomes Assessment: The college has made significant progress since its last decennial review in instituting regular efforts to evaluate its goals for an Amherst education. These developments have largely been driven by the college's strategic planning initiative, much of which has relied upon data to inform resource allocation and new initiatives. Recently, the administration provided the board with a progress report on the implementation of each of the plan's priorities. A number of the goals have already been achieved, and long-range and short-range implementation planning and evaluation will continue.

In addition to the OIRRS, new organizational structures have been developed to help facilitate assessment work. For example, an Ad Hoc Curriculum Committee has spent almost three years developing college-wide learning goals and investigating the merits of the open curriculum and its outcomes as they relate to the college's commitment to diversity and inclusion. In addition, as an outgrowth of the Curriculum Committee's work, an Ad Hoc Committee on Student Learning has been charged with the ongoing review of key academic metrics; this group will begin work next academic year. The Curriculum Committee hopes that the Committee on Student Learning will become a standing faculty committee, which will give the college ongoing capacity to track academic achievement, identify potential achievement gaps, and move Amherst toward the goal of inclusive excellence.

Finally, the dean of the faculty has recently piloted changes to the compensation and support of department chairs. With more systematic support, the chairs will assume greater responsibility for reporting curricular changes to the dean of the faculty thereby increasing support for academic program assessment within departments.

Learning Goals and Standards: The college aims to "educate men and women of exceptional potential from all backgrounds so that they may seek, value, and advance knowledge; engage the world around them; and lead principled lives of consequence." This mission guided the college's strategic planning process and has been well integrated into its plans and priorities.

As previously noted, the Ad Hoc Curriculum Committee has redrafted the college-wide learning goals. The new statement articulates six learning goals that work in conjunction with the open curriculum. In addition to these goals, most (though not all) majors convey a mission statement and learning goals publicly on their departmental websites. A review of sample syllabi provided with the self-study suggests that courses support the progressive development of skills, knowledge, and habits articulated in the programmatic outcomes. In addition, all majors require students to complete a capstone. This is a valuable resource in assessing learning outcomes in the major, although, as the report acknowledges, there is still progress to be made in achieving greater consistency across departments.

There is also assessment of co-curricular and administrative work. More than twenty offices now have unit-specific mission statements aligned with the college's broader mission and are currently working to develop evaluation metrics as part of their discrete strategic planning processes.

Assessment Plan Implementation: Amherst regularly uses data to inform decision-making and planning. The college reports that, between 2008 and 2017, 74 percent of its academic departments underwent external program review with recommendations being shared with the president, the dean, and the CEP.

External review of administrative units follows the same format. As the functions of the college have expanded, a culture of critical self-reflection within the units has strengthened. Offices of the dean of the faculty, admissions, financial aid, student affairs, and advancement hold annual retreats to plan and evaluate their work. In addition, Amherst has hired external consultants to review student life, information technology, communications, human resources, the Center for Community Engagement, classrooms, and campus facilities.

Since the last comprehensive review, Amherst has engaged in a number of focused evaluations to assess its college-wide learning goals, including writing and speaking and students' research and library skills. It has also conducted an evaluation of its open curriculum and of the placement of students into gateway chemistry courses. For example, in 2015 the writing program conducted a pilot evaluation of students' writing and speaking skills during the beginning, middle, and end of the semester. Results demonstrated that, of the 165 students who participated in the study, the majority showed growth in their writing ability, while roughly half showed improvement in speaking. As a result of this evaluation, the college hired an expert in public speaking who is now situated in the writing center to help address students' needs.

In fall 2016, the library undertook an evaluation to examine first-year students' research abilities and library skills. Results revealed that these skills were variable. The library staff responded to this concern by working to develop course modules to ensure that all students leave their first year equipped to conduct research.

At the heart of the college's evaluation effort has been its focus on the open curriculum. The CEP has developed a creative system of "coding" courses with keywords, which provides students with some of the intellectual scaffolding of distribution requirements without the requirements themselves. The OIRRS monitors course distribution patterns and academic transcripts to evaluate how students are navigating their way through the open curriculum. As part of the college's strategic planning process, the OIRRS conducted an analysis of student course-taking patterns, by division and demographic categories, to determine whether students were selecting courses based on their academic strengths or demographic characteristics. Results of this analysis were broadly reassuring. While students have an overrepresentation of courses within their major divisions, to a great extent most students are exposed to a wide range of courses across the curriculum. These data showed that humanities majors, on average, take fewer science courses than science majors take humanities courses. Variations in enrollment patterns based on race and ethnicity or national origin were present but modest, while striking variations in gender, especially in some of the larger majors, were notable.

Finally, in order to strengthen the pipeline of students pursuing STEM disciplines with varying levels of academic preparation, the college undertook a study to examine its science placement strategies — specifically, student selection into the gateway chemistry sequence. Based on an analysis of course-taking patterns and placement data, it was found that more advanced students were self-selecting into the easier chemistry sections. The college responded to this challenge by giving students a placement instead of allowing them to choose among three options. This has resulted in more balanced enrollments across chemistry courses.

In addition to these new assessment initiatives, the OIRRS has re-engineered their departmental activity reports and has plans to create dashboards and on-demand, flexible reporting tools that will provide just-in-time data to senior academic leadership and chairs of academic departments.

College-Level Educational Effectiveness: The self-study and its companion documents provide ample evidence of a well-planned, effective educational experience through which the college promotes achievement of appropriate knowledge, skills, and attitudes. As part of its approach to assess this overarching enterprise, the college uses a robust program to survey its students and alumni. This includes surveys of incoming freshmen and graduating seniors. Amherst is also a member of the Consortium on Financing Higher Education (COFHE), a data-sharing network with its peer institutions, allowing it to benchmark its performance.

Results from the 2017 COFHE Enrolled Student Survey revealed that 96 percent of Amherst students were satisfied/very satisfied with the quality of instruction and 97 percent were satisfied with the out-of-class availability of faculty. Eighty-two percent of alumni responding to the 2017 COFHE Alumni Survey reported that they would encourage a high-school student to attend Amherst. More than 70 percent of alumni reported having earned graduate degrees. More than 90 percent of the members of the classes of 2001–2016 reported the college had prepared them adequately or better on seventeen out of twenty areas of development. Survey results also point to areas where the college may need to improve to achieve its educational aspirations: the study of foreign languages and the “understanding of the process of science and experimentation.”

Overall, key indicators suggest that Amherst’s institutional programs serve the college’s students well. As the Data First tables show, undergraduate graduation rates have remained high, typically at 94 percent. The first-year retention rate has been 98 percent in recent years. Data compiled by the OIRRS show that 89 percent of 2016 graduates were employed full-time or pursuing further education within six months of graduation.

Since its last comprehensive review, the college has made substantial progress in developing an understanding of student learning assessment and in building the organizational supports for it. The team admires the seriousness and thoroughness with which the college has addressed and continues to address the challenge of adjusting its academic program and academic policies to ensure excellent educational outcomes for all members of its diverse student body.

Standard 9: Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure

Integrity: Amherst demonstrates a strong commitment to its core values, which include equity in educational opportunity, diversity and inclusion, academic freedom, and sustainability and respect for the environment. The college views as central to its mission the fulfillment of these values both within the boundaries of its campus and beyond.

In the midst of national conversations about freedom of expression on college campuses, Amherst has taken steps to reaffirm its commitment to academic freedom. At the behest of the faculty, the Committee of Six convened a process, which included consultation with faculty and students that yielded the *Amherst College Statement of Academic and Expressive Freedom*. It was approved by the faculty and endorsed by the Board of Trustees in 2016 and is now published prominently on the dean of the faculty's website.³ The statement reaffirms Amherst's "commitment to expressive freedom that enables the college to thrive as a space of liberal inquiry."

The college's commitment to respect for individuals is expressed formally in a *Statement on Respect for Persons*, which affirms Amherst's commitment to a community that is "free from interference, intimidation, or disparagement in the workplace; the classroom; and the social, recreational, and residential environment." Statements from the board and resources on its website further articulate Amherst's commitment to diversity in the form of a "community that looks like the world."⁴ President Martin has supported efforts to strengthen diversity and inclusion by committing, in 2015, to the completion of specific campus actions that are all publicly available on the website.⁵ Amherst is now taking steps to follow through on these actions, including the hiring, in 2016, of its first chief diversity and inclusion officer. The newly established Office of Diversity and Inclusion is organized around a mission "to support and sustain the growth of a just, equitable, vibrant, and intellectually challenging educational environment"⁶ and has as its inaugural focus the recruitment, retention, and development of diverse faculty and staff, and the creation of a more inclusive community. A recent email by President Martin to the Amherst community in support of DACA students further demonstrated the college's aspirations to support fully individuals of many varied backgrounds.

The college works to ensure that all members of its community adhere to high standards in their conduct and interactions via policies and procedures that are visible and accessible. Employee policies cover, for example, conflict of interest, harassment, and drugs and alcohol, and they are published on the website.⁷ Students are expected to adhere to the *Student Code of Conduct*, including core principles of the honor code embodied in four statements: *Statement of Intellectual Responsibility*, *Statement on Respect for Persons*, *Statement of Freedom of Expression and Dissent*, and the *Statement of Student Rights*. These statements are published both in the Faculty Handbook and as part of the *Student Code of Conduct*. The *Student Code of Conduct* reflects the evolution of what was formerly the Student Handbook into a more integrated and complete resource for students, and includes the recent addition of standards relating to environmental health and safety. Amherst actively upholds community standards;

³ https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/dean_faculty/node/66770

⁴ <https://www.amherst.edu/amherst-story/diversity>

⁵ <https://www.amherst.edu/amherst-story/diversity/actions-to-promote-diversity-and-inclusion/building-diversity-and-inclusion>

⁶ <https://www.amherst.edu/amherst-story/diversity/office-of-diversity-inclusion/mission-strategy>

⁷ https://www.amherst.edu/offices/human_resources/policies

“peer ambassadors” are trained to provide education and awareness about these standards. These measures reflect an overall approach that ensures that policies “don’t just live in a book,” as one member of the college’s Emergency Management Team remarked.

Amherst demonstrates a commitment to ensuring its policies and procedures are fair, equitable, and clear. Grievance procedures are published in employee handbooks and made available on the web.⁸ The Office of the Dean of the Faculty has purview over grievances relating to faculty; the *Student Code of Conduct* includes grievance procedures for students. Amherst employs an ombudsperson to work with community members in a confidential and neutral way to facilitate their navigation of campus structures, resources, and policies toward the resolution of conflicts. An Office of General Counsel (OGC), established in 2013, regularly reviews and assesses policies and procedures.

The college is strengthening mechanisms for raising concerns about policies and conditions in an open and constructive way. A staff survey—the first of its kind—was administered in fall 2017 and revealed substantive issues affecting staff morale. At an open forum with the review team, including about forty staff members, some reported a sense of reluctance among staff to openly voice concerns out of fear of retribution and/or uncertainty about job security. Others highlighted their long tenures at the college as a reflection of the positive working environment. In general, the sentiment was that senior staff are taking the results of the survey seriously. The administration has convened three working groups to focus on survey findings. These include a general advisory group, a rewards and recognition group, and a performance management group. Staff expressed a strong hope that the scope and charge of these groups will be clarified, and their work widely shared and communicated across campus.

Amherst’s response to recent challenges related to Title IX offers another example of the college’s efforts to foster a climate of openness, where concerns can be raised and addressed swiftly and effectively. In the aftermath of accounts in 2012 by former and current students about sexual assaults on campus, a Special Oversight Committee on Sexual Misconduct (SMOC) was convened. The report issued by this committee described these accounts as deeply troubling and shocking, and forthrightly acknowledged a history of efforts by Amherst that fell short, in many cases, in protecting students from sexual assault. Its comprehensive review of the campus environment, resources, education, college history, and policies resulted in a wide range of recommendations, many of which have already been realized or are under way.

Since the SMOC report, Amherst has implemented its first sexual misconduct policy,⁹ created a separate adjudication process specific to sexual misconduct, and experimented with initiatives to help create healthy social spaces that minimize the risk of sexual misconduct. Reporting to the chief policy officer/general counsel, the Title IX office maintains independent oversight of the college’s response to reports of sexual misconduct, and engages in a range of training and educational initiatives geared toward prevention. These are positive steps. Continued progress on this front will require that Amherst remain steadfast in its efforts to nurture a “posture of openness” as issues are brought forward, and in its commitment to bring the college to a place of “thorough, enthusiastic, and transparent compliance with both the letter and the spirit of the

⁸ https://www.amherst.edu/offices/human_resources/employeehandbooks

⁹ <https://www.amherst.edu/campuslife/health-safety-wellness/sexual-respect/sexual-misconduct-and-harassment-policy/node/497976>

law,” as the SMOC recommended in its 2013 report. One staff member poignantly described to the review team how she understands the mandate from Amherst leadership in conducting the work of the college: “Do what’s right, even when it’s hard.”

Transparency: The previous section highlights many examples of policies, statements, and actions that are public and easily accessible. The college has weathered many significant challenges in recent years. Its responses demonstrate a pattern of willingness to engage its critics and take steps to implement procedures, structures, and policies that will help it build a safer, more inclusive, and ever more vibrant institution.

Materials are widely available in a variety of formats. In addition to the materials referenced in the previous section, the review team found admissions procedures clearly posted on the web,¹⁰ along with detailed information to prospective and current students and their families about the costs of attending Amherst.¹¹ A current copy of the Amherst course catalog is accessible on the web, along with archived copies from three recent years.¹² Audited financial statements and annual reports going back to 2005 are readily available as well.¹³

The chief communications officer emphasized the importance that she and her staff place on aligning materials with Amherst’s mission and strategic goals. The 2016 Amherst College Communications Strategy balances a focus on amplifying positive coverage of the college with a responsibility to address inquiries of a negative nature “immediately, directly, and honestly.” The self-study reports that the Office of Communications regularly reviews and debriefs its strategies and incorporates feedback from stakeholders as part of its ongoing work. Members of the senior staff commented on the need to focus more as a college on internal communications, within and across each division. Judging from comments from staff in an open forum with the review team, continued effort in this direction would be well received.

Public Disclosure: The self-study documents important statements, policies, and disclosures, many of which are described in the preceding sections. The Data First pages of Standard 9 in the self-study inventory include policies related to academic honesty, intellectual property rights, conflict of interest, privacy rights, nondiscrimination, and so on. The inventory also includes links to processes for complaints and grievances, for making inquiries, for seeking employment, and more.

Although the Data First inventory does not include references to statements about program excellence, learning outcomes, or achievements of graduates or faculty, these elements can be found in various places on the Amherst website. For example, most (though not all) academic majors include a description of learning goals; typically, these can be found in just a few clicks in the “About the Major” section. Many also include a link with information about alumni who have graduated in the major. Faculty profiles and accomplishments are searchable by department/program.¹⁴

¹⁰ <https://www.amherst.edu/admission/apply>

¹¹ <https://www.amherst.edu/tuition>

¹² <https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/college-catalog>

¹³ https://www.amherst.edu/offices/office_of_the_chief_financial_officer/annual_reports

¹⁴ https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/faculty_profiles

While substantive information about the academic experience and the benefits of an Amherst education are available and prominent on the website,¹⁵ descriptions of the open curriculum are lean in comparison to the prominence of this feature as a distinguishing characteristic of the Amherst experience.

Information about Amherst's accreditation status is clear and easily available from the dean of the faculty's website.¹⁶

Affirmation of Compliance

To document the institution's compliance with federal regulations related to Title IV, the team reviewed Amherst College's Affirmation of Compliance form signed by the CEO, dated February 20, 2018. As noted in this report, Amherst College publicly discloses on its website its policy on transfer of credit. Public notification of the evaluation visit and of the opportunity for public comment was made by the college in *the Daily Hampshire Gazette* on September 6, 7, and 8, 2017; in the summer 2017 edition of *Amherst Magazine*; and on the college's website. Copies of the college's grievance procedures for faculty, staff, and students are publicly disclosed on its website. The college has no online programs and courses. As discussed in "Standard 4: The Academic Program," the team's review of course schedules and syllabi for a cross-section of Amherst's course offerings found the assignment of credit reflective of the college's policy and consistent with the commission's standards.

Summary

The review team appreciates the openness of the president, the college's staff, and all the groups with whom we met, who provided insight into this special and robust institution. Amherst College has a strong culture of academic rigor, a true desire for inclusiveness, and a deep commitment to the liberal arts. It understands its mission well. The members of its community share a compelling vision for undergraduate education, and have for many generations. These characteristics have allowed Amherst to lead the way among its peer liberal arts institutions. Yet, its strong traditions may be a double-edged sword as it may now be necessary to re-order some of the college's established intellectual, cultural, and structural assets to better align with current external conditions and the evolving demographics of the college and the United States.

At the same time, identifying and maintaining the best traditions that have defined this community will remain a key ingredient to its success. To evolve and adjust fully to a society undergoing significant demographic, social, and technological transformation, the college must become somewhat more deliberate in choosing which cultural and structural traditions should be maintained and which should be transformed or abandoned. Finding a balance between, on the one hand, the traditional and enduring features of the college (e.g., when faculty meetings are

¹⁵ <https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife>

¹⁶ https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/dean_faculty/general_information/neasc-reaccreditation-2018

held) and, on the other hand, the innovation that characterizes its new Strategic Plan will be crucial to its success.

There are also governance, organizational, and structural issues that the institution still needs to resolve. There is no blueprint for how to combine a traditional culture with innovative and entrepreneurial planning, and it is not the review team's role to recommend a particular path or consider what has worked at other institutions. Although we can identify areas of concern for the institution to examine as it evolves to meet contemporary needs, the president, her administration, and the Amherst community must identify how best to address these concerns within Amherst's established and relatively particular environment. With the college's gifted and compassionate president, strong academic leadership, deeply committed faculty, significant human and financial resources, and engaged and ably led Board of Trustees, the review team is confident the Amherst community will find the appropriate way to address them.

The team offers the following summary of its findings—both the strengths and the challenges—in the spirit of contributing to the momentum observed during our brief visit. We hope this report will be helpful to Amherst as it moves into the future.

Strengths

- Strong sense of institutional direction, manifested in the 2015 Strategic Plan
- Financial resources and a major improvement in the condition of the physical plant (a reduction from 71 percent to 10 percent in need of attention)
- Quality and diversity of the student body
- Consistency in the institutional commitment to inclusivity and student success
- Ongoing professionalization of the staff
- High level of curricular innovation
- Depth of commitment to institutional self-reflection

Concerns

- A weak sense of belonging among multiple student communities
- A lack of clarity around review processes and standards for untenured tenure-line faculty
- Though governance structures are deliberate, they can impede action
- Administrative internal communications