

Amherst College



Fifth-Year Interim Report

to the

Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
New England Association of Schools and Colleges

Amherst College
Amherst, Massachusetts

January 2013

Draft of Dec. 21, 2012

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Introduction

In preparation for our fifth-year review, President Carolyn “Biddy” Martin and Dean of the Faculty Gregory Call in September of 2011 appointed a steering committee comprising themselves, the assistant dean and two associate deans of the faculty, registrar and associate registrar, director of institutional research (IR), faculty and student members of the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP), and researcher of the CEP. As with our previous NEASC self-study (2008), we embedded this review in the continuing decision-making structures of the college. Because this report focuses on educational effectiveness, the CEP has particular authority by virtue of its central role in academic planning and evaluation on behalf of the faculty. The steering committee, along with representatives of the faculty executive committee (the Committee of Six), met with NEASC President and Director of the CIHE, Dr. Barbara Brittingham, and the Deputy Director, Dr. Patricia O’Brien, on December 1, 2011.

Our 2008 self-study reported on a sequence of one-year planning processes from 2002 to 2007, which focused on academics and admission (see **Chapter I**). In the current self-study we report on the implementation since 2008 of recommendations from that process and on the launch of our comprehensive strategic planning project. It is anticipated that this effort will conclude in the spring of 2014(see **Chapter V**). As before, we have sought broad participation by faculty and trustees in preparing this report. In December of 2011, the faculty convened to discuss accreditation review and the need for academic departments to formulate and publicize their learning goals, to describe their assessment tools and plans, and to report on recent changes to major programs and curricula in response to assessments of learning. By May of 2012 all departments had done so and, in some cases, had made changes to programs as a result of articulating these goals (see **Table E1, Part A**). In the spring semester of 2012, under the leadership of the CEP, a revision of the college’s general education goals was discussed and modified by the Committee of Six and by the full faculty. With extensive faculty input, a final set of goals was approved in May of 2012 (see **Chapter IV, Section C**).

In March of 2012 the trustees held a two-day retreat in New York City on “Enrolling and Engaging a Diverse Student Body.” The meetings focused on the outcomes of our initiatives to widen admission access and enhance academic support, as well as on our options for improving student learning. With presentations from administrators, faculty members, and Prof. David Harris, then associate provost of Cornell University and currently provost of Tufts University, the trustees examined the relation of our admission practices to student achievement and considered the prospects of further curricular, cocurricular, and academic support initiatives.

(The board retreat scheduled for June of 2013 is planned to address strategic planning, including the Commission's recommendations as a result of this interim review.)

In May of 2012 the steering committee, along with representatives of the incoming CEP and Committee of Six, attended a workshop on learning assessment led by Dr. Barbara Walvoord.

In the fall of 2012 representatives of the steering committee met with the CEP, the First-Year Seminar Committee, and the chairs of academic departments to discuss the next steps in assessing learning in general education and in department majors, and also met with the College Council to initiate the process of formulating learning goals for student life as part of the strategic planning process.

Chapters I, II, IV, and V and the accompanying Interim Report Forms were the responsibility of a drafting team drawn from the office of the dean of the faculty, IR office, and registrar's office: Jesse Barba, Kathleen Goff, Rick Griffiths (editor), Marian Matheson, Nancy Ratner, and Janet Tobin. The Standards review in Chapter III was compiled by that team from reports submitted by various administrative units, including Marian Matheson (Standard Two), Nancy Ratner and Carolyn Bassett (Standard Six), Jim Brassord and Rick Mears (Standard Eight), Shannon Gurek (Standard Nine), and Peter Rooney (Standard Ten).

[To be completed in January of 2013:

Preliminary drafts of this report were reviewed by the CEP and the Committee of Six and by the chairs of key trustee committees: Danielle Allen, Brian Conway, Howard Gardner, and board chair Cullen Murphy. The current draft is being made available for review and comment by all faculty, staff, and trustees.]

Abbreviations

ABC	=	Advisory Budget Committee (2008-2009)
CAP	=	Committee on Academic Priorities (2005-2006)
CAS	=	Committee on Academic Standing
CBL	=	Community-based Learning
CCE	=	Center for Community Engagement
CEP	=	Committee on Educational Policy
CLA	=	College Learning Assessment
CMS	=	Content Management System
CPR	=	Committee on Priorities and Resources
COFHE	=	Consortium on Financing Higher Education
DAR	=	Department Activity Report
FCAFA	=	Faculty Committee on Admission and Financial Aid
Five Colleges	=	Amherst, Hampshire, Mount Holyoke, and Smith Colleges and the University of Massachusetts
FTE	=	Full-time Equivalent
FYS	=	First-Year Seminar
IR	=	Institutional Research
NSSE	=	National Survey of Student Engagement
SPSC	=	Strategic Planning Steering Committee
TAP	=	Teaching and Advising Program

“Writing intensive” courses are designed to meet the needs of students whose secondary education did not adequately prepare them for writing at Amherst.

“Writing attentive” courses can be offered in any discipline if they include the improvement of students’ critical writing as a conscious and stated objective.

“Intensive” courses in the natural sciences and mathematics are sections of introductory courses that provide additional instructional time and attention to meet the needs of students whose secondary education did not adequately prepare them for work in the class.

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Chapter I: Institutional Overview

Amherst College is an independent, residential, highly selective liberal arts college, which enrolls some 1,800 students with the goal that, in the words of our mission statement, “they may seek, value, and advance knowledge, engage the world around them, and lead principled lives of consequence.” Our mission of bringing together “the most promising students, whatever their financial need” was recently reaffirmed in a period of financial uncertainty. At all levels, the campus community is consultative, consensus driven, and distinguished by the broad sharing of responsibility, including that of students “for undertaking inquiry and for shaping their education within and beyond the curriculum” (mission statement). In reaffirming the value of educational self-determination for students, the faculty has recently focused on its own responsibilities in advising and in defining learning goals.

Administratively we are in a period of transition. President Martin took office in 2011, and Cullen Murphy took office as chair of the board of trustees in 2012. The college’s first provost, Professor Peter Uvin, academic dean of Tufts University’s Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, has just been appointed, and will take office in the summer of 2013. Searches are currently under way for the continuing positions of dean of students and of chief financial and administrative officer (formerly, treasurer).

President Martin is leading a transition from a decade-long cycle of planning initiatives and implementation—mainly concerning curriculum, pedagogy, and admission—to the full-scale strategic planning effort described in the **Introduction** and in **Chapter V**. To recapitulate that history, starting in 2002 the college began a progression of essentially one-year initiatives in planning and evaluation with active participation by all faculty members and all trustees:

- 2002-2003: Special Committee on the Amherst Education (SCAE): writing and quantitative skills, academic support for less well-prepared students, and institutional research;
- 2003-2004 (with some continuations): faculty working groups on writing, quantitative literacy, global comprehensive, experiential learning, and the arts;
- 2004-2005: Committee on Academic Priorities (CAP): curricular innovation, expansion of the faculty, support for research, broadening admission access;
- 2006-2007: adoption of the college’s first mission statement;
- 2007-2008: self-study for decennial review by the Commission.

This interim report describes the implementation of plans formulated in that extended process, chiefly the recommendations of the CAP, which were approved by the faculty in 2006. That implementation was just beginning when we reported to the Commission in 2008.

Important outcomes of the CAP and resultant initiatives include:

- Articulation of the learning goals for the First-Year Seminars (FYS) (followed in 2012 by goals for general education and all majors) (**Table E1, Part A**);
- Broadened admission access by replacing loans with grants, admitting international students “need blind,” and increasing their numbers to 9% of the student body;
- The expansion of the student body from 1700 to 1800 (**Data Form 4.2**);
- Increased instruction and academic support in writing and quantitative reasoning;
- The beginning of a significant expansion and diversification of the faculty to foster curricular innovation and close attention to student learning (**Data Forms 5.1 and 5.2**);
- The creation of four interdisciplinary programs with majors: architectural studies, biochemistry / biophysics, environmental studies, and film and media studies;
- Enhanced curricular and cocurricular involvement with local communities through the Center for Community Engagement (CCE);
- New opportunities for faculty to collaborate on pedagogy and advising through the Teaching and Advising Program (TAP) and annual workshops;
- Increased support for faculty research and development, including assured full-year sabbaticals for assistant professors at full compensation, and full compensation for tenured faculty upon application for a Senior Sabbatical Fellowship.
- Strengthening of the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) in overseeing the curriculum;
- Improved capacity in institutional research and assessment, and in integration of evidence with decision making.

These innovations mark a change in college culture. Before 2002 there had not been any successful college-wide academic planning since the creation of the “open curriculum” in 1970, other than adjustments to the required seminars for new students (currently FYS). After the decade-long cycle of planning and implementation described above, we can claim stronger coordination in addressing the changing needs of students both through curricular innovation and through heightened attention to student learning.

In terms of curriculum, a heartening overall outcome is that, though we plan and change slowly, we stick to our commitments, since those who propose new programs also implement them. For example, the faculty members who advocated and investigated experiential learning from 2004 onward now support the thriving programs of the CCE and staff the two-dozen community-based learning (CBL) courses. Similarly, the investigation by faculty working groups of new interdisciplinary directions has led to the launch of the four new programs listed above, which are staffed by members of fifteen existing departments. Amherst’s democratic, department-centered, and mandate-resistant culture had in earlier decades been resistant to change, but has in the last decade shown a strong capacity for innovation through cross-departmental initiatives to advance central learning goals.

We have also advanced the perpetual project of understanding the learning needs of the “new” student body—more diverse, international, and nontraditional than ever before. The concerned faculty members who from 2002 onward diagnosed weaknesses in writing and quantitative instruction and who researched best practices in peer institutions now teach the “intensive” writing and quantitative courses for less well-prepared students and participate in the hiring of faculty colleagues who come with graduate training in these pedagogies. Academic departments have stretched themselves to grow not only at the advanced level in supporting student research in capstone projects and seminars, but also in improving access to students from all backgrounds, or, as the SCAE envisioned in 2003, in making the open curriculum truly open to all. To reach both underserved and majority students, we have focused attention and resources on “high-impact” educational activities, such as those listed by the Association of American Colleges and Universities in its 2007 report, *College Learning for a New Global Century*. These include first-year seminars, CBL, student-faculty research, experiences with diversity, study abroad, internships, and capstone courses and projects. Of “writing intensive” and “writing attentive” courses, there are now more than two-hundred each year—more than a quarter of all courses offered. Every student has multiple “high-impact” activity options in every college year.

There are also areas where we have increased our planning capacities in ways not imagined in 2008. Through a broadly consultative process, our management of financial resources allowed us to weather the downturn of 2008 and subsequent budget cutting with no retreat on mission or decline in morale. Despite the downturn, we have planned and launched the construction of the 220,000 sq. ft. science center, to be completed in 2017—a project calling for an unprecedented level of coordination of professors and administrators with architects, engineers, IT specialists, and our financial management team.

As we turn to the future, we realize the limits that this recent growth and innovation have revealed in our capacity to plan, evaluate, and administer. As is discussed in **Chapter V**, we have therefore launched a strategic planning project, which will articulate our priorities and aspirations for the next two decades and which will strengthen our planning and evaluation in four areas—student life, curriculum and pedagogy, financial modeling, and facilities—in ways that will be overseen by the newly created office of the provost. While the agenda for the strategic planning project must remain open, the current self-study leads us to single out three priorities for action within the next five years: (1) the reorganization and reconceptualization of student life, (2) support and assessment of student learning, and (3) faculty diversity. In many ways, these concerns all relate back to the driving question that motivated the SCAE in 2002: How can we meet the changing needs of an extraordinarily talented and diverse student body who are given substantial responsibility in shaping their own education? We now know better than in 2002 the limits of what any one unit can do acting in isolation.

We have welcomed the year-long process that led to this report as a chance both to take stock of our progress over the last five years and to begin the process of envisioning the next twenty.

Chapter II: Areas of Special Emphasis

In February 2009 the Commission asked that this report address six areas of special emphasis:

1. *Advancing an ambitious institutional agenda in a time of likely significant constraints on financial resources.*
2. *Reaching a constructive conclusion on the recommendations of the Committee on Academic Priorities, particularly in the areas of writing and quantitative skills.*
3. *Defining with more clarity the purposes of the first-year seminar.*
4. *Evaluating student learning beyond the class and department level as a cumulative general education achievement.*
5. *Improving the clarity on the ideal distribution across categories of courses that a student might be advised to pursue.*
6. *Monitoring the workload required by faculty committees, particularly the Committee of Six, to ensure that it not interfere excessively with teaching commitments and professional development.*

Note: *Special Emphasis Four* on evaluating student learning is deferred to **Chapter IV, Section C**, in order to be incorporated into a comprehensive discussion of learning assessment.

1. *Advancing an ambitious institutional agenda in a time of likely significant constraints on financial resources.*

Description: Despite the financial downturn that began in October of 2008, the college has by and large implemented the agenda described in our self-study of January of 2008. We have increased financial aid, primarily in the form of grants, by 35% from FY 2009 to 2012, with a reduction of students' reliance on private loans of 44% for the same period (**Data Form 6, Financial Aid, Debt**). We have also increased support for sabbatical leaves, and, after a delay, begun increasing the size of the faculty (**Data Form 5.3**). Belt-tightening, a successful fundraising campaign, and recovering markets have allowed us to sustain core commitments without the frills and to begin vital capital projects. We proceed now with greater caution about financial sustainability and with enhanced structures for college-wide discussion of priorities.

Chronology: The ambitious recommendations of the Committee on Academic Priorities (CAP), approved by the faculty and trustees in the spring of 2006, were just being implemented when we reported to the Commission in 2008, shortly before the downturn. Early in 2009, another select committee was appointed, the Advisory Budget Committee (ABC), comprising faculty, staff, students, administrators, and trustees. Its recommendations were approved by the trustees in August of 2009.¹ Though the ABC occasioned debate both in its inception and in the

¹ ABC report: <https://www.amherst.edu/media/view/119548/original/ABC+Report+FINAL.pdf>.

adoption of its recommendations, the process of broad consultation proved to be credible and effective. The burden of downsizing, though done without terminations, was felt by staff members in some units. However, as a result of the ABC process, the staff's representative body was reorganized as the Employee Council, which now has two voting seats on the Committee on Priorities and Resources (CPR).

With prudent financial management, economies on non-instructional services, and the vigorous support of alumni for the \$425-million comprehensive campaign (which has now reached \$446 million), the priorities for financial aid were maintained and academic innovation continued unabated. To maintain institutional momentum through the downturn, the trustees authorized a temporary increase in the maximum approved spending rate of 5% on the endowment, though 5% was in fact never exceeded. The greater hardships endured by neighboring institutions provided a reality check, and the community's sense of common purpose and progress sustained itself well. On June 30, 2012, endowment assets totaled \$1.6 billion and were approaching their pre-recession levels (**Data Form 9**).

The area of most significant retrenchment – in undertaking new capital projects – did not figure in the CAP process. The most pressing capital projects – replacing the science center, expanding office capacity, and renovating and expanding dormitory space – have now been undertaken. Together, these constitute the largest capital project in the college's history. Other major projects have been postponed (see under *Physical and Technological Resources in Chapter III*).

Meeting the CAP goals: The CAP was the most extensive planning exercise in the college's history. Apart from a delay in the expansion of the faculty, partly caused by a wave of retirements, the central goals have been met and, in some cases, surpassed. The particulars of implementation are indicated in parenthesis:

Goals fully met:

- Broader admission access by replacing loans with grants, enhancing recruitment of lower-income students, increasing the number of international students and admitting them need-blind, and increasing the size of entering classes (**Data Form 6, Financial Aid, Debt**);
- An assured fourth-year leave at 100% of salary for assistant professors and the availability of leaves at 100% for all tenured faculty who submit acceptable research proposals for review by the faculty executive committee (Committee of Six);
- More resources and staff time to support faculty development in pedagogy (→ *through the Teaching and Advising Program (TAP), writing center, academic technology services, research and instruction department of the library, First-Year Seminar (FYS) program workshops, Center for Community Engagement (CCE), and Mead Art Museum*);
- Permanent funding of the Amherst Academic Interns;
- Enhanced support for community service and internships (→ *through the CCE*);
- Requirement of a "writing attentive" course for all students (→ *the required FYS course was designated as "writing attentive" in 2009*)

Partly met:

- Expansion of the faculty by approximately 10% (→ CAP priorities have been used from 2007 onward in allocating new faculty positions; net expansion beyond retirements commenced in AY 2011-2012) (**Data Form 5.1**);
- Evaluation of all faculty in all classes (→ periodic self-evaluation of senior faculty was approved by the faculty in 2007; to be reviewed by the CEP in AY 2012-2013)
- Sponsored research officer (→ after an unsuccessful hire, the function was absorbed by the office of foundation and corporate relations and the dean of the faculty's office, with expanded programming and outreach).

Not met:

- Need-based support for summer language study (→ a few fellowships are funded by an endowed fund)

Appraisal: The fulfillment of the CAP goals is universally well regarded. Despite some faculty concern about the long-term sustainability of our commitments to financial aid, the student body's cultural and socioeconomical diversity has become central to the college's identity. The CAP's strategy of leveraging curricular innovation and faculty diversification by means of new full-time equivalent (FTEs) tenure-track positions, whole or fractional, has succeeded beyond expectations in that it has prompted related innovations not incentivized by new FTEs:

- The "intensive" sections in writing and quantitative areas (for less well-prepared students) have proved their worth – to the point that departments generate them without the award of new FTEs. Chemistry received .25 FTE for an "intensive" section and, after successful experimentation, now has such sections for the first four courses in the introductory sequence.
- The FTEs designated for interdisciplinary projects supported the development of the environmental studies program (1.75 FTEs); comparable initiatives (architectural studies, biochemistry / biophysics, and film and media studies) have subsequently emerged from existing departments by reconfiguring existing positions.
- Though a complementary process not anticipated by the CAP, much of the desired curricular innovation has been achieved quickly and efficiently through the hiring of now highly regarded learning specialists in the writing center, academic technology services, library, Mead Art Museum, and CCE.

Similarly the two FTEs allocated for allowing departments to "borrow" an FTE (against a future retirement) to make an opportune hire to diversify their staffs have already been used, returned, and used again in ways that have stimulated greater creativity in recruitment and hiring. In sum, in terms of strengthening instruction in core learning capabilities, supporting new programs, and diversifying the faculty, we are on schedule to achieve the CAP's goals, though

in some areas through unanticipated means. We believe that the college can show a reasonable record of success in implementing planning, as per *Planning and Evaluation*, 2.4. At the same time, the difficult but productive ABC process of 2009 has increased our discipline in using “realistic analyses of internal and external opportunities and constraints” (*Planning and Evaluation*, 2.2).

Projections: The strategic planning project will reconsider and update the CAP recommendations with a more comprehensive view of all aspects of a residential college integrated with critical attention to our financial models.

2. *Reaching a constructive conclusion on the recommendations of the Committee on Academic Priorities, particularly in the areas of writing and quantitative skills.*

Overview: Writing and Q-skills will be handled separately below. Both areas will be addressed by the strategic planning project. Three crucial developments not foreseen by the CAP bear on both areas:

- **Learning goals:** Both “written expression” and “quantitative reasoning” have been formally adopted as general education learning goals by the faculty (May 2012), as well as by departments as goals for majors (see **Table E1, Part A** and **Chapter IV, Section C**).
- **Administration:** As recommended by the academic support task force of 2008-2009, the position of dean of academic support and student research within the dean of the faculty’s office has been created to supervise “intensive” courses and support services.
- **Student interest:** Instruction in writing and Q-skills, once viewed as “remedial” by our sophisticated students, is now much sought-after as a key to valuable and transferrable skills. “Intensive” courses tend to be over-subscribed.

Writing skills

Description: In a modified form, the CAP’s call for enhanced writing instruction has been met and surpassed, but with growing awareness of how much needs to be done. The shift to greater intentionality about writing skills is now felt across the curriculum.

The CAP recommendations for a required “writing attentive” course for all students was implemented in 2009 by designating the required FYS course as such. Moreover, in AY 2012-2013 more than two-hundred courses are designated as “writing attentive.” Beyond what the CAP foresaw, there are in AY 2012-2013 six “writing intensive” courses for students in need of more help with fundamental capacities. These six sections have sufficient places to respond to the estimate of the Special Committee on the Amherst Education (SCAE) in 2003 that 10-15% of incoming students need such attention. We have an effective screening system for new

students' writing skills in that, by faculty vote, FYS instructors have the responsibility of determining which students are in need of "intensive" courses in following semesters.

Of the recommended allocation of two FTEs to support writing instruction, 1.5 have been allocated: two one-quarter FTEs to departments that have agreed to teach "writing intensive" courses, and two half FTEs to support half-time service by senior faculty members to direct the writing center. The dean of academic support also teaches two "writing intensive" courses.

The problem of coordinating writing instruction across the curriculum has been addressed by a complete reorganization and expansion of the writing center under the direction of two senior faculty members. The center has been moved administratively from the dean of students to the dean of the faculty. A staff of professional writing specialists with advanced degrees has been appointed in place of the student peer tutors. The center has been given a prominent location on the central quadrangle in the largest of the first-year dorms, which was recently remodeled. Funding for the center has increased five-fold since the SCAE red-flagged Amherst's support for writing in 2003. The center offers tutorials and instruction at all levels, from grammar, mechanics, and ESL up to senior-thesis work, with theses accounting for a quarter of spring appointments. In addition, the directors conduct a semester-long faculty seminar in writing pedagogy, which nearly one-third of tenure-line faculty have by now attended. A co-director of the center coordinates the annual two-day workshop for FYS instructors.

The long-standing summer science program for less well-prepared incoming students has been paralleled since 2009 by a summer humanities and social science program. Both emphasize the development of writing skills and introduce students to the services of the writing center.

Appraisal: There is substantial indirect evidence that these efforts have been fruitful. Fewer Amherst students claim to have received no writing instruction (just 1% of graduating seniors in the most recent COFHE survey in 2011, compared to about 10% in 2004). The percentage of students describing their writing skills as "above average" is now steadily increasing with each year at the college from 52% of all students in their first year to 63% of seniors. The percentage reporting "excellent" skills has been rising with each year from 10% of those in their first year to 35% in their senior year; overall 98% now report solid skills by graduation.

Evidence that these improvements have resulted from greater attention to writing pedagogy comes directly from the students' own assessment of writing instruction: In 2004, 51% students reported that writing instruction at the college ranged from non-existent to merely competent; in 2011, just 3-4% assessed writing instruction as non-existent or poor. At the other extreme, in 2004, 48% reported that writing instruction was "above average," or "excellent," compared to 70% in 2011, when fully 83% of seniors expressed satisfaction with writing instruction.

Some of these improvements can be tied to changes in the FYS program: In the 2012 FYS survey, 78% of students reported receiving helpful comments on their writing from their seminar

instructors, and the great majority associated improvements in their writing skills directly to participation in the seminar; just 10% thought their writing had not improved after the seminar.

The shift toward greater intentionality in writing instruction noted in our self-study of 2008 has continued. New colleagues join the faculty with far more training in writing pedagogy than in earlier generations, and departments incorporate writing and research skills into their major programs with increasing explicitness. For example, all of the quantitative and natural science departments, save one, declare writing to be a central learning goal (e.g., neuroscience: “to write clearly, concisely, and gracefully”) (see **Table E1, Part A**). Writing is assessed by departments in thesis and capstone projects, resulting in adjustments to major requirements and course offerings, as is discussed in **Chapter IV, Section C.2.b**.

In sum, we have reached a “conclusion” to the CAP’s recommendations on writing only in the sense of experiencing a profound change in institutional culture, for which change we have strong indirect evidence that is consistent across multiple measures. With the support of the writing center, we have found coherent strategies for improvement across the curriculum and, in the FYS program, a system for identifying students in need of particular attention.

Projections: We will continue to give central attention to writing instruction in the creation and labeling of courses and in hiring new colleagues. Under the direction of the dean of the faculty and the IR director, a pilot portfolio project to evaluate direct evidence of student learning across disciplines and a separate pilot project with FYS instructors to explore the dynamics of learning in the first college semester will report in two years (see **Chapter IV, Section C.1.b**).

Quantitative reasoning

Description: The CAP recommendations and our projections in our 2008 self-study involve multiple goals that we have variously surpassed, approached, and deferred. Below, we address three areas:

- Curricular development and student response: The extent of interdisciplinary innovation in the sciences and mathematics has exceeded expectations, as has the sharp uptick in enrollments.
- Support for less well-prepared students: We have made good progress in improving course design, advising, and academic support, though growing demand poses challenges. We continue to evaluate initiatives and to respond to ineffective ones.
- Q-reasoning as a general education goal: Until the faculty revision of learning goals in May of 2012, the conversation had faltered, in part because of the urgency of science center planning and the focus on departmental efforts. The addition of a keyword for Q-reasoning has helped to identify social science courses that address these skills.

Curricular development and student response: Initiatives under way in 2008 have come to fruition. In its first two years, the biochemistry / biophysics major (with faculty from biology,

chemistry, and physics) has flourished, attracting more than a score of majors to a rigorous program that requires some thirteen science and math courses. Begun in 2008, environmental studies (with faculty from biology, chemistry, geology, mathematics, physics, as well as the humanities and social sciences) has become the seventh largest major in the college.

Like peer institutions, we are experiencing stronger interest in quantitative and scientific areas. Enrollments have increased for a number of reasons: changes to the pre-med requirements; requirements in some new majors (e.g., statistics for environmental studies); the popularity of economics courses (more than half of graduating students have taken the introductory course, ECON 111); and sustained interest in the psychology major, with its statistics requirement. Moreover, the introductory statistics course in the mathematics department has grown steadily from thirty-five students in 2006-07 to 134 in 2011-12. Introductory calculus has risen over the same period from 336 students to 517; the higher-level math courses have increased enrollments from 586 to 956. While the number of students who have taken no or just one quantitative course has remained steady over the last decade at around 15%, the number of students taking ten or more courses has increased from one-third to one-half of the class:

Class of:*	Number of Quantitative Courses Attempted						Total Grads	Avg. Quant. Courses
	Zero	One	Two to Three	Four to Six	Seven to Nine	Ten Plus		
2003	6%	11%	19%	20%	11%	34%	408	7.4
2004	4%	6%	24%	19%	8%	38%	417	7.8
2005	5%	9%	22%	18%	8%	39%	393	7.9
2006	9%	10%	19%	13%	9%	40%	402	7.9
2007	9%	12%	18%	12%	11%	38%	394	7.5
2008	4%	8%	20%	16%	8%	44%	422	8.8
2009	5%	8%	14%	16%	13%	45%	400	8.8
2010	5%	10%	18%	17%	11%	39%	411	8.2
2011	7%	10%	19%	14%	10%	40%	462	8.4
2012	6%	9%	14%	13%	9%	49%	424	9.6

(These figures include economics and quantitative courses in psychology, as well as the STEM disciplines; for the breakdown by divisions, in which economic and psychology are separated from science and math, see the table in **Chapter IV, Section C.1.b.**)

Support for less well-prepared students: Of the 2.5 expansion FTEs recommended by the CAP to support the increase in courses with a Q-reasoning component, one was allocated to mathematics for statistics, and fractional FTEs were allocated to chemistry, biology, and economics to allow new appointments in exchange for a commitment from the department to teach “intensive” courses. (The obligation is on the department to teach the courses with its extra capacity, not on the new hire.) The CAP’s conclusion that increased staffing is crucial to addressing the quantitative capabilities of an increasingly diverse student body has been

confirmed in detail by self-studies and external reviews in chemistry (2010) and mathematics (2012). In terms of hiring to foster Q-skills, we are well ahead of our 2008 projections. The mathematics department is currently searching for a third statistician and a second applied mathematician, and has hired a lecturer to address the needs of less well-prepared students.

In devising courses to address the needs of underprepared students, we have confirmed that “close colloquy” (mission statement) is key, and have accordingly continued to devote significant faculty resources to class size. We have also learned how differently the “intensive” dimension needs to work in different disciplines:

- Calculus: With good results, mathematics continues to offer “intensive” sections of introductory calculus (MATH 111) (replacing the fourth hour with a 90-120 minute group project session based on Uri Treisman’s problem-based pedagogy), as well as MATH 105 + 106 (a two-semester version of Math 111). There are therefore three paths through introductory calculus, as well as an advanced course (MATH 112).
- Chemistry: As a preparation for science and premedical study, a joint biology-chemistry course (CHEM 131, “Chemical Basis of Biological Processes”) for first-year students fosters the Q-skills needed for further study. “Intensive” sections of the two semesters of introduction (CHEM 151 and 161) and the two semester of organic chemistry are also offered. The department developed the position of academic manager to attend to the needs of students in intensive courses for both semesters of the introductory level. The success of this position (as confirmed by an external review in 2010) led to the creation of a second manager position for both semesters of organic chemistry. In addition, students who postpone CHEM 151 to the spring have a smaller, *de facto* “intensive” section.
- Economics: The department has tried multiple formats, including designated “intensive” sections and extra tutorials for any students who are struggling. However, screening to diagnose students’ needs proved to be less reliable than in other disciplines, and the “intensive” format was less palatable for the broad student population that undertakes ECON 111. In AY 2012-2013, the department is experimenting with a much smaller section size (entailing larger staffing) to allow a more tailored response to the full range of student capabilities.

The staffing of the Q-center, also now under the dean of the faculty, has been augmented by the normalization of a half-time mathematics associate, who works with the summer science program as well as with semester courses. There is also a two-year “green dean” position for a recent Amherst graduate to cover disciplines not covered by the director and associate. The Q-center reports steadily rising numbers over the last decade, more than doubling at last count from about 12-14% of the student body in 2003, with an average of four visits each, to 26% in 2009, with an average of six visits. While a larger role for the center has been envisioned in the planning of the science center, it has not experienced the level of transformation seen with the writing center.

Departments have continued to experiment with more effective pedagogies. For example, by tracking grades the chemistry department discovered that some students successful in introductory courses later encountered difficulties, particularly in organic chemistry. They then added an “intensive” section and increased office hours for organic chemistry. The biology department tested different models of study support and exam preparation, and experimented with two types of introductory courses—one based on lectures and labs; the other, on discussion and labs. On common examinations, both groups scored essentially the same.

Q-reasoning as a general education goal: After 2006, the emphasis shifted from the college-wide planning discussion to implementation by departments. In this period, the general conversation on Q-reasoning across the curriculum and on the constant one-sixth or so of students who take one or no Q-course subsided amid the pressures of planning the science center and meeting rapidly growing student demand. On the keyword matrix, “quantitative reasoning” and “science and math for non-majors” have gained less currency among faculty than have the “writing attentive” and “writing intensive.” Though the larger curricular goal has figured importantly in FTE allocation and facilities planning, there was a lapse in the conversation until the faculty discussion of general education goals in 2012.

Appraisal: In terms of resources, we have expanded our commitments in this area in order to meet and foster student interest. As an “open curriculum” school, our goal is to ensure that our curriculum is indeed open to everyone who wants to undertake a math or science course and to ensure that we offer enough Q-reasoning within the social sciences to graduate an educated student body. To this end, we have invested heavily in faculty and staff and now provide multiple pathways to help students succeed in our quantitative programs. Although the small number (6%) of students who take no quantitative courses continues to be a concern, we take pride in knowing that the 94% of our students who have taken at least one quantitative course have done so in regular departmental courses (i.e., not designed to meet a graduate requirement), with one-half of them taking ten or more quantitative courses. There is also positive evidence across departments in our students’ high acceptance rate to medical school, graduate school, and success in receiving NSF fellowships (see **Chapter IV, Section A**).

Projections: Meeting demand and maintaining standards in these areas will be a challenge. The Q-center, which is currently somewhat hidden in Merrill Science Center, will join the science library in a prominent position in the new science center, with extensive nighttime accessibility. The planning of the new center incorporates capacity for a range of activities to bring in the whole student body and to break down the isolation of the natural sciences. Other social science majors may incorporate statistics more centrally into their programs.

3. <i>Defining with more clarity the purposes of the first-year seminar.</i>
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Description: Prompted by continuing faculty concern and by the recommendation of the Commission's visiting team in 2008, seven faculty members were appointed as an ad hoc committee to review the FYS program. For the review, the committee revisited a student survey of FYS from 1998 and surveys of graduating seniors in 2005 and of all students in 2006; consulted broadly with the faculty at large; interviewed all recent instructors; and reviewed the practices of twelve peer institutions.

The committee concluded that the pre-reform program was unsustainable and lacked sufficient rationale to justify its anomalous status as the single college-wide curricular requirement, apart from completing a major. However, they found consensus that the strengths of the FYS as it was then constituted—as an inquiry-centered and intellectually pluralistic program—could be retained if the program also adopted a common pedagogy for addressing the critical educational goals that were identified repeatedly by both students and faculty. In April of 2009, the faculty approved the following description of the program (**Table E1, Part A**):

Each seminar shall constitute an inquiry-based introduction to critical thinking and active learning at the college level. To achieve this goal, all courses will have an enrollment limit of 15 and will provide discussion-based classes, writing-attentive instruction with frequent and varied assignments, close reading and critical interpretation of written texts, and careful attention to the development and analysis of argument in speech and writing. In addition, each seminar will supplement the advisory system by early identification of students whose performance could especially benefit from the services of a professional writing counselor or a second semester writing-intensive course.

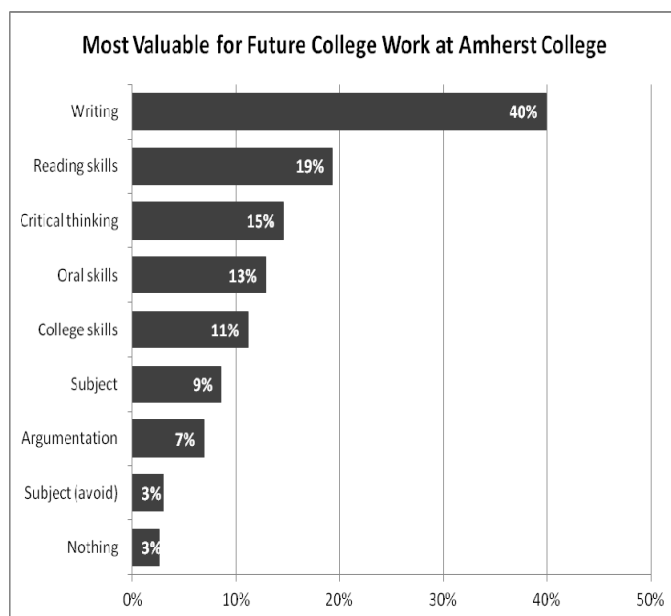
For the sake of clarity and cohesiveness in the program, the faculty decided not to include other learning goals, such as quantitative and research skills. The seminars are taught by tenure-line faculty members who have at least a year of service in the college and who elect to join the program. The instructors' first-year advisees (typically four or five) are usually drawn from the roster of their FYS. Recruitment has held up without compulsion or incentives. The fears proved to be unfounded that the emphasis on writing might deter faculty members from natural science departments. The level of participation of untenured faculty, always low, has increased somewhat, to about one-sixth of the teaching staff.

Each seminar is, to the degree possible, a microcosm of the incoming class in respect to gender balance, diversity of cultural background, athletic participation, and admission credentials. These distributions are meshed with students' preferences among the twenty-five to thirty different topics offered in any given year. The FYS program itself is emblematic of the open curriculum in offering broad choice among subjects, each of them taught by a strongly committed instructor – a volunteer – who can communicate his or her excitement about a field and explain its role within liberal arts learning.

Appraisal: The clarification of the goals of the program has resulted in greater intentionality on the part of both instructors and students. In spring of 2012 the faculty FYS committee conducted a survey of the student cohorts (classes of 2014 and 2015) that had experienced the reformed program, and compared the result to the survey made five years ago. More than half of students in these classes responded (n = 518). The results show appreciable improvement on most measures of student engagement and include more reports on essay conferences and their perceived helpfulness.

For assessing the FYS program's effectiveness in addressing its reformulated goals, the open-ended questions are most telling. To the question of what was most or least helpful in the course and what the respondent wanted more of or less of, 232 students responded in their own words, with about half of them touching on two areas and a few mentioning three. Most frequent were responses citing discussion and writing, and no student wanted less writing. Respondents had little enthusiasm for lectures and requested more of them only when frustrated with unfocused discussion. The most problematic learning goal was "close reading," on the evidence of complaints about amounts of reading that were not covered sufficiently in class discussion.

In response to the question, "What did you learn in your First-Year Seminar that you think will help you most in your future work at Amherst College?," of all students responding (n = 233), the following responses were most frequent. About half of students mentioned in their own words more than one crucial area of learning:



We use “college skills” to group the various issues that aid the transition to college work, such as preparation for class, talking to the professor, and budgeting time. In discussing oral skills and college skills, respondents frequently mentioned how the supportive atmosphere of the seminars gave them confidence to participate.

Overall, the alignment of the program’s outcomes as perceived by students with the goals defined by the faculty seems strong. The development of oral and written expression is most appreciated by students; the development of critical reading skills is more problematic because of lack of clarity about the role of assigned readings that are not analyzed in class discussion..

Projections: The May workshops for continuing and new FYS staff will continue to review the effectiveness of the program overall, as well to pool information about innovative techniques in teaching. In AY 2012-2013 the FYS committee has launched a pilot program for a task force of current instructors to explore ways of evaluating how the various sections address the program’s learning goals (see **Chapter IV, Section C.2.b**).

4. *Evaluating student learning beyond the class and department level as a cumulative general education achievement.*

This area is discussed in **Chapter IV, Section C**, as part of a wider review of learning assessment. The learning goals for general education were reviewed and revised by the faculty in 2012 (see **Chapter IV, Section C.1**). Those goals include written expression and quantitative reasoning, which are discussed above in *Special Emphasis Two* (see **Table E1, Part A**)

5. *Improving the clarity on the ideal distribution across categories of courses that a student might be advised to pursue.*

Since 2008 four initiatives of unprecedented scope have addressed academic advising and other curricular guidance for students:

- The transition to online student records and other advising materials for advisors and to online registration (2009-2011);
- The renumbering and clearer sequencing of all courses (2009-2011);
- The designation of course goals by the “keyword matrix” in the on-line course builder (“quantitative reasoning,” “writing intensive,” etc.) (2009);
- The redesign of the weekly course schedule to create more time slots, diminish scheduling conflicts, and expand students’ course choice (2011);
- The promulgation of learning goals for general education and all majors (2011-2012) (see **Chapter IV, Sections C.1.a and C.2.a**);

- A pilot project on learning goals in advising (2009-2011), which was followed by the college's most extensive review of all aspects of advising by a faculty-administrator task-force (AY 2011-2012), which will be discussed by the faculty in the spring of 2013.

These interrelated, campus-wide processes entailed protracted consideration by various task forces, standing faculty committees, academic departments, and the full faculty, supplemented by workshops, faculty and student focus groups, TAP lunches, trainings, and surveys. While slow, these broadly consultative processes achieved excellent buy-in and raised awareness about our educational values, as well as the logistical problems of giving students sufficient and timely advice for making full use of the open curriculum. Both students and advisors now have more real-time information about registration, transcripts, course goals, and advising procedures.² We hold a two-day workshop for advisors in January and mentor new advisors.

Appraisal: The impact of these enhanced resources for advisors and of the newly defined learning goals will not be clear for several years. The 2011-2012 ad hoc committee on advising, comprising faculty and administrators, was given a broad charge, which started from the question of whether advising should "focus more specifically on the articulation and assessment of student learning goals." The charge went on to address faculty and non-faculty responsibility, equity in workload, orientation advising for new students, and the impact of the new on-line system. After reviewing survey and other evidence (nearly 250 pages in length in the multiple on-line appendices) and investigating advising at a score of peer institutions, the committee found significant grounds for concern in three major areas:

- Unevenness in the advising loads for faculty, in that some advisors have few advisors, while those in certain departments have twenty, thirty, forty or more.
- Frequent reassignment of the pre-major advisor. Only one out of three students has the same advisor for all of the first two years; a quarter have three or more advisors. A 60% increase in faculty leaves over the past five years plays a significant role.
- Widespread student reports of minimal advising time each semester. Some 58% percent report less than fifteen minutes for pre-registration and drop-add periods.

The advisor, they argue, should function less as just a gatekeeper on course registration and more broadly as a teacher in organizing reflection on students' attainment of their learning

² Manual for advisors, https://www.amherst.edu/media/view/348884/original/Advising_Manual.pdf; guidelines for first-year advising: https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/dean_faculty/tap/advising/advising_faculty/firstyear;

goals, both within and beyond the advisor's specializations. The committee proposes a shift to a single-advisor system, with no transfer to a major advisor (or two, for double majors). Course selection and career planning within majors would become the responsibility of a director of studies in each major. Advising loads could be capped at sixteen, and faculty could be evaluated by their advisees. For the initial registration of new students, the committee proposes replacing individual advisors by boards of deans and faculty members. They also recommend appointing an associate-dean level director of advising.

Students show less discontent with the system than do faculty members. Survey data continue to show, as we reported in 2008, that student satisfaction with pre-major advising is at the median for our cohort and near the top of that cohort for advising in the major. But the need to lead students to maximize their opportunities within the open curriculum puts particular pressure on the advising system, as was noted by the Teagle task force on advising in the open curriculum in 2007, by the visiting team in 2008, and by the Commission in its letter of 2009.

Projections: The faculty will consider the ad hoc committee's report in the two-day advising workshop in January, 2013, and in full faculty meetings in the spring semester. Initial review by the Committee of Six suggests that the reform of the advising system will be difficult and protracted. Given the centrality of advising to the open curriculum and the demands it makes on faculty, perpetual and intense scrutiny of the system may be necessary and healthy. It can be expected that advising will figure importantly in the strategic planning project.

6. Monitoring the workload required by faculty committees, particularly the Committee of Six, to ensure that it not interfere excessively with teaching commitments and professional development.

Description: In AY 2011-2012, each member of the Committee of Six was given course relief for one course in compensation for the workload. On a trial basis, this course relief has been extended for another two years.

Appraisal: The course relief was found to provide significant relief for the pressures of committee service for those who could avail themselves of it. However, newly elected members are sometimes already locked into their teaching schedules for their first year of service on the committee when they are elected, and other members feel constrained by department needs to forego the course relief. The burdens of committee service and other administrative service are being assessed in AY 2012-2013 in a survey conducted by the Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE) of Harvard School of Education.

Projections: Course relief for the Committee of Six will be reconsidered by the administration after the three-year trial. The administrative burdens on the faculty will be addressed by strategic planning project.

Chapter III: Standards

Standard One: Mission and Purposes

The Mission of Amherst College

Terras irradiant

“Let them give light to the world.”

1821

Amherst College educates 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.

Amherst brings together the most promising students, whatever their financial need, in order to promote diversity of experience and ideas within a purposefully small residential community. Working with faculty, staff, and administrators dedicated to intellectual freedom and the highest standards of instruction in the liberal arts, Amherst undergraduates assume substantial responsibility for undertaking inquiry and for shaping their education within and beyond the curriculum.

Amherst College is committed to learning through close colloquy and to expanding the realm of knowledge through scholarly research and artistic creation at the highest level. Its graduates link learning with leadership—in service to the College, to their communities, and to the world beyond.

Description: Since its adoption in 2007, the college’s mission statement has gained wide currency on campus and among alumni. The statement is the lead item in the college catalogue and is prominently displayed on the college website.¹ Its priorities shaped the deliberations of the Advisory Budget Committee (ABC) (2008-2009), and a key phrase served as title for the “Lives of Consequence” comprehensive fundraising effort (2008-) as a “mission-driven campaign.”² The statement frames the articulation of mission by other units, such as the library³ and the Center for Community Engagement (CCE).⁴ In our current discussions of the promise and limits of not-for-credit online learning, we are considering how, as a residential college, we can use technology to enhance instruction for our residential students and, perhaps at the same time, honor more broadly our mission to educate students “from all backgrounds” and to foster life-long learning for our graduates (see below, *The Academic Program*).

¹College mission: <https://www.amherst.edu/aboutamherst/mission>.

²Comprehensive campaign mission: https://www.amherst.edu/campaign/about_the_campaign/a_mission_driven_campaign

³Library mission: <https://www.amherst.edu/library/about/policies/mission>

⁴CCE mission: <https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/cce/about/mission>

Appraisal: Distilled from broad and protracted consultations in 2006-2007, the mission statement serves as a living charter that is owned and tested in college life. In November of 2012 in response to students' concern about the handling of sexual misconduct complaints and about the climate of respect on campus, classes were cancelled and offices closed for a day-long retreat on the core mission values of "Community and Individual Responsibility" attended by 1,900 students, faculty, and staff (see below, under *Students*). Student protesters called into question what we mean by "lives of consequence." Over the past five years, the goal of linking "learning with leadership" has been validated by greater intentionality in leadership training in student life programs, including the CCE and department of athletics (see below, under *Students*).

Projections: The strategic planning project will examine the continuing pertinence of the mission statement and the college's success in fulfilling it (see below, **Chapter V**).

Standard Two: Planning and Evaluation

The strategic planning project is described in **Chapter V**. Learning assessment is discussed in **Chapter IV, Section C**.

Description: Our planning and evaluation capacities in various domains have increased substantially, but in ways that call for stronger integration. Separate areas include:

Science: As the most complex capital project in the college's history, the decade-long planning of the science center has involved multiple interlocking groups of trustees, faculty, students, and administrators in strategic planning for science instruction and research, academic support, and the integration of digital and other information resources (see below, *Physical and Technological Resources*).

Financial: As discussed in **Chapter II, Special Emphasis One**, and in this chapter under *Financial Resources*, our financial planning served us well in the recession from 2008 onward. The staffing in investment management has been increased, and budget presentation has been revamped to be more comparable to the audited financial statements.

Physical and technological resources: To monitor our practices and needs, we continue to use authoritative external consultants, e.g., Sightlines LLC for staffing; Payette and Associates for the science center; Shepley Bulfinch for the library (2008) and academic space (2011).

Center for Community Engagement (CCE): Designed with assessment as a central component, the CCE has a director of assessment. Using evidence from various sources—surveys, focus groups, interviews, and other feedback from students and community partners—the CCE has been devising baseline data about students' attitudes and self-reported learning, conducting formative assessment of programs, and working to articulate intended outcomes. The CCE is overseen by an advisory board of faculty, students, alumni, members of the community, and experts in the field. Within the next two years, the CCE will assess the learning outcomes of its

programs and begin to correlate students' activities at Amherst with their patterns of post-graduation behavior (see **Chapter IV, Section C.1.d**).

Mead Art Museum: In response to an external review committee, the museum was reorganized under new direction in 2007 and thereupon launched a vigorous program of instruction and outreach. A mission statement, strategic plan, code of ethics, and collection plan were adopted. An external advisory committee consisting of museum professionals, alumni, community members, and supporters was instituted.

The office of IR and planning: This office has been augmented by a further fulltime staff position (to 2.5 FTEs) and is implementing a comprehensive strategy with two organizing goals:

- to provide integrated "life-cycle" data on students from admission to post-graduation. Using the COFHE suite of surveys, the office benchmarks results with peer institutions. To track post-graduate study, we subscribe to the National Student Clearinghouse;
- to calibrate and deliver actionable evidence to support decision-making by the trustees, administrators, and faculty (in committees, departments, and working groups). The IR office has responded to the problem of broadly distributed responsibilities coupled with high turnover (annually for faculty committee chairs and biennially for department chairs) by making evidence accessible online by theme (e.g., learning goals, class size, admission) rather than source (survey or study) and by creating consistent definitions and benchmarking to peer institutions. Since academic departments monitor and adjust their programs on an annual basis, the IR office has distilled the data typically requested for external reviews into an annual department activity report (DAR) on enrollments, demographics, student satisfaction, and outcomes (see **Chapter IV, Section C.2.b**).

The CEP: A strengthened CEP with greater research support was a central outcome of the 2002-2007 planning cycle. The CEP reviews new courses and new majors, but generally reviews modifications of existing majors only when they may restrict access for students – an issue to be reviewed and discussed with faculty in AY 2012-2013. The CEP also approves the creation of Five College certificates. The members of the CEP serve on the steering committee for this self-study and oversee initiatives in learning assessment (see **Chapter IV, Section C.1.b**).

The CEP also evaluates requests for new and replacement tenure-track positions and makes ranked recommendations to the administration. The dean of the faculty serves ex officio on the CEP, hears all deliberations, and has responsibility for awarding all final FTE allocations in consultation with the president. Amid rapid faculty retirement and replacement, such review plays a crucial role in maintaining instructional standards and curricular coordination across departments. Over the last five years, the CEP has received and evaluated 102 requests and also evaluated several target-of-opportunity requests each year outside the regular review cycle. All but four departments have requested positions, usually repeatedly. Requests are evaluated on the basis of a systematic, college-wide evaluation of programmatic needs, informed by external department reviews and department self-studies. Departments must justify each new or replacement position based on a balance between the department's view of the field as it is

evolving—how an area might fit into the department’s mission, the courses that would be sacrificed if a particular specialty were not represented—and the college’s broad curricular interests, such as staffing the First-Year Seminars (FYS), courses for non-majors, and the broad areas articulated by the Committee on Academic Priorities (CAP) (e.g., writing, Q-skills, et al.). Departments engage in substantial self-scrutiny in preparing requests, often delaying position requests until an external review has been completed.

Appraisal:

Implementation of the results of planning (*Planning and Evaluation*, 2.4): The CAP recommendations were, with minor exceptions, implemented and enhanced (see **Chapter II, Special Emphasis One**).

Periodic review of academic and other programs (*Planning and Evaluation* 2.6): The pace of external reviews for academic departments has been increased such that every unit will be reviewed once every ten years or less (see below, *The Academic Program*). Information technology was reviewed by an external committee in 2011 (see below, *Library and Other Information Resources*). Academic support services were comprehensively reviewed in 2008-2009, and mental health services have been under review by a task force since 2010 (see below, *Students*). Academic advising is currently under review by the faculty (see **Chapter II, Special Emphasis Five**). Financial management and investment are rigorously evaluated on an ongoing basis under the supervision of the board of trustees (see below, *Financial Resources*). The college’s compliance with Federal Title IX is currently under intensive review by outside consultants and by the Sexual Misconduct Oversight Committee (see below, under *Students*).

Understanding what students gain from their education (*Planning and Evaluation*, 2.7): Since 2008, this area has been under increased scrutiny by the faculty, administration, and trustees (see **Chapter IV, Section B**).

Comprehensive and broadly participatory planning and evaluation (*Planning and Evaluation* 2.1): All sectors of the college have made significant independent progress in the past decade in respect to planning and evaluation, with high and increasing levels of participation. The success of coordinated academic planning, especially the CAP, amounts to a culture change after decades of impasse. Coordination among various domains (academics, student life, facilities, finances) is not yet systematic.

Projections: The need for comprehensive planning and evaluation will be addressed by the strategic planning project under the direction of the provost (see **Chapter V**).

Standard Three: Organization and Governance

Description: The structures of organization and governance have remained essentially the same, with the recent addition of the position of provost. President Martin took office in August of 2011, and Cullen Murphy became chair of the board of trustees in July of 2012.

Professor Peter Uvin will assume the position of provost in 2013. In keeping with its bylaws, the board has seen significant turnover since 2008; eleven of the twenty-one statutorily mandated members have joined since then. The selection process pays close attention to the independence and representativeness of board (*Organization and Governance*, 3.2). The desired balance has been maintained in respect to: alumni and non-alumni; careers in higher education and in the non-profit and for-profit sectors; and racial and cultural backgrounds. The proportion of female members of the board has increased to a third, including for the first time the president. The board's periodic self-evaluation (*Organization and Governance*, 3.4), which had been sporadic, was in 2009 regularized to occur every two years. Each trustee submits a written assessment of the board's procedures and effectiveness, with the aggregated results then reviewed by the trusteeship committee and the full board.

In respect to shared governance (*Organization and Governance*, 3.9, 3.12, and 3.13), the voice of the faculty and student body in governance has long been well established. In 2010 the employee organization, the Advisory Council on Personnel Policies (ACPP), was reconstituted as a more representative group called the Employee Council (EC) and given two voting seats on the Committee on Priorities and Resources (CPR), which advises on budgetary decisions. This change is in keeping with the acknowledgment in the mission statement that students work with "faculty, staff, and administrators dedicated to intellectual freedom and the highest standards of instruction in the liberal arts." The EC has collaborated with the president in organizing open meetings on budgetary matters, and Title IX and has sponsored open houses for the community to see the behind-the-scenes working of various units.⁵

Appraisal: Our governance structures have proved themselves to be both stable and flexible. Through the ABC of 2008-2009, trustees, faculty, administrators, and staff members worked together to achieve consensus on budgetary changes. The limits put on medium- and long-range planning by the structure of faculty committees, with frequent turn-over and one-year terms for chairs, are being addressed by improving access to institutional data (see above under *Planning and Evaluation*) and by the creation of the office of provost. An area of urgent concern is student life, for which planning and organizational reform have not kept pace with the increasing scale and complexity of responsibilities.

Projections: The office of the provost is being created in order to provide greater capacity and better coordination for planning across the campus. The position of treasurer was reorganized as chief financial and administrative officer, and will be filled in AY 2012-2013. The position of dean of students will be redefined and filled in AY 2012-2013. We have a two-year goal to make a preliminary review of this administrative reorganization. The Sexual Misconduct Oversight Committee will report early in 2013, and the administration will review implementation of their recommendations within two years (see below, under *Students*). The organization of student life programs is a central focus of the strategic planning project, to report early in 2014. On all of the above, see **Chapter V**.

⁵ Employee Council Open Houses: https://www.amherst.edu/offices/committees/employee_council/openhouse

Standard Four: The Academic Program

Initiatives in instruction and support for both written expression and quantitative reasoning are discussed in **Chapter II, *Special Emphasis Two***. Academic advising is discussed in **Chapter II, *Special Emphasis Five***. The general education requirement (*The Academic Program*, 4.16-4.19) and the assessment of student learning (*The Academic Program*, 4.48-4.54) are discussed in **Chapter IV, Section C**.

Description: The period of exploration and experimentation that began with the Special Committee on the Amherst Education (SCAE) in 2002-2003 and continued with the Committee on Academic Priorities (CAP) 2004-2005 has had a range of outcomes:

- four new programs with majors;
- significant changes in the curricular of two-thirds of department majors (see **Chapter IV, Section C.2.b** and **Table E1, Part A**);
- initiatives across departments in community-based learning (CBL) and student research;
- the hiring of learning specialists in writing, Q-skills, IT, research and information skills, CBL, and fine arts.

This forward motion has shaped and been reinforced by the replacement of retiring and departing faculty at the rate of 5-to-8% of the faculty per year (**Data Form 5.3**), and has itself proved useful for recruitment and retention.

Curriculum: From the network of cross-departmental faculty working groups of 2003-2005 and the CAP process have come new majors and programs: environmental studies (2008), biochemistry / biophysics (2010), film and media studies (2010), and architectural studies (in collaboration with the Five Colleges, 2012). Environmental studies had already been envisioned in the building of Beneski Hall (2006) and staffed by the specializations of faculty members in ten existing departments. Several new appointments have been made since, and in numbers of majors, the major now ranks seventh in the college. The interdisciplinarity of these undertakings is paralleled by other projects, such as the Four College Biomathematics Consortium⁶ and the global classrooms project. New Five College certificate programs have been approved in ethnomusicology; middle eastern studies; Native American Indian studies; queer and sexuality studies; Russian, east European, and Eurasian studies; and sustainability studies. With the support of the CCE, two dozen CBL courses are currently offered.

Online instruction: In 2012 the faculty, administration, and trustees began an intensive inquiry into the potentials and costs of online instruction. As a “purposely small residential community” and one “committed to learning through close colloquy” (mission statement), the college does not award credit for online courses, including hybrid courses in the Five Colleges, other than in rare cases of personal hardship. However, in light of the rapid development and

⁶ Four College Biomathematics Consortium: <http://4cbc.cs.umass.edu/>.

diffusion of technologies for non-credit instruction and their promise to enhance our current on-campus pedagogies, we are discussing collaboration with a consortium of universities and colleges to develop massive open online courses (MOOCs). Currently under discussion is a pilot project to offer over the next four years up to four on-campus courses that also support a not-for-credit online component. The aim is to adapt the most effective current technologies for on-campus instruction, for reaching alumni, and for reaching the wider international audience of interested learners.

Student research: In keeping with our expectation that students “seek, value, and advance knowledge,” developing their research capabilities has become a central focus of departments (see **Chapter IV, Section C.2.b**), as well as of academic technology services in IT and the research and instruction department of the library (see below, under *Library and Other Information Resources*). Growing numbers of students—currently more than one hundred—work with faculty over the summer on honors projects and, in underclass years, as laboratory assistants. They are increasingly joined by students in the humanities and social sciences. With the support of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the college launched a program for research seminars that bring four-to-six students into close collaboration with an instructor’s research. The four initial seminars in the spring semester of 2011 and four in 2012 were warmly received, and some forty student participants have received support for summer projects. Students from one seminar have continued work for over a year in creating an online database of botched executions in prisons between 1900 and 2000. With the instructor, these students have published three papers in scholarly journals, with a book in process. The current phase of the seminar program is to adapt the model for incorporation into departmental programs. There are comparable pilot projects supported by the Teagle Foundation, as well as projects designed by faculty members on their own initiative. A “Synergies Summit” in May of 2012 brought together the participants to compare experiences and propose next steps.⁷ In December of 2012 students and faculty from the first two years of the Mellon program presented their results in a conference for Amherst faculty and representatives of a half-dozen peer institutions.

Appraisal: In terms of curricular innovation and renewal, we have exceeded our projections of 2008 and done so without relegating routine or elementary instruction to an adjunct or second-tier faculty. These new initiatives will be supported by the growth of the faculty by approximately 10%, which commenced as of 2011. Our relatively independent academic departments have continued to show ingenuity and resourcefulness in keeping pace with both their own disciplines and the changing needs of Amherst students (**Table E1, Part A**). About their students’ capacities and needs, departments receive far more information than they did five years ago through the Department Activity Report (DAR) and other means (see above, *Planning and Evaluation*, and **Chapter IV, Section C.2.b**).

⁷ On the Synergies Summer (on student research) of May, 2012, see <https://www.amherst.edu/media/view/399832/original/SynergiesSummitMay16.pdf>.

We have made significant progress in evaluating the effectiveness and needs of academic departments. As mentioned above under *Planning and Evaluation*, the CEP through its role in reviewing now-frequent requests for tenure-track positions has achieved a stronger overview of curricular change and growth. The pace of hiring has given new impetus to the program of external department and program reviews. With the support of the IR office, the depth of evidence provided has increased markedly. Moreover, the pace of these reviews has been increased, as recommended by the Commission's visiting committee in 2008. There have been ten reviews since 2008, and they are now scheduled at a rate of four or more a year so as to cover each department every ten years or less. With some catching up, we plan to achieve a firm decennial schedule as of AY 2017-2018. Priorities for review include departments never reviewed (N = 6 of departments founded before 2008), and those reviewed more than fifteen years ago (N = 3). The guidelines for reviews stipulate that evidence for assessment of student learning be provided (*The Academic Program*, 4.52).⁸ In practice, however, the direct evidence of student learning is less strong than the indirect evidence, which often includes extensive surveys of graduates of the department. Follow-up conversations a year after the visiting team report have been sporadic.

Individual majors are under continuous review and revision (**Table E1, Part A**). As discussed in **Chapter II, Special Emphasis Five**, course sequencing became clearer with the transition to three-digit course numbers, which entailed shared understandings about the expectations of 100s, 200s, 300s, and 400s courses. The 200s level is receiving particular attention as the moment to introduce methods in the disciplines—both for potential majors and a general audience—and to address written and oral expression and the use of information resources.

Academic support services have been enhanced by a major review (2008-2009), which led to the appointment of a fulltime dean of academic support and student research (see below, under *Students*). Academic advising is currently receiving a major review (see **Chapter II, Special Emphasis Five**).

Projections: The pedagogy and curriculum working group of the strategic planning project will evaluate the academic program. Over the next five years the coordination of natural science departments will evolve as they prepare to move into the new science center. Planning is currently under way for a research center to bring together humanities and perhaps social science faculty, with capacity to host post-graduate fellows. The dean's office and IR office will provide more guidance and support for direct learning assessment in department and program reviews, and the year-after follow-up conversations will be regularized.

⁸ Guidelines for external review of academic departments and programs:
https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/dean_faculty/deptchairsinfo/deptreview.

Standard Five: Faculty

Description: Our instructional faculty has grown from the 212 of five years ago to 240, with close to 93% in full-time positions (**Data Form 5.1**). Women now constitute 46% (110) of the faculty, and 15% (35) of the faculty self-identify as coming from underrepresented ethnic and racial groups (this number excludes the 22 faculty with origins outside the USA). The CAP goal of raising the cap on tenure-line positions from 167 to 181 has been complicated by a spate of retirements but continues to move forward. Teaching faculty now include 161 tenured or tenure-track faculty, 21 faculty members who teach part-time while phasing into retirement, 31 visiting full-time faculty, 28 long-term or senior lecturers (including 5 artists- and writers-in-residence), and 9 postdoctoral fellows. Nine faculty members have Five College appointments that allow the campuses to incorporate fields for which no institutions could support a fulltime appointment. FTEs range by department from a high of 18 in English (including 5 on phased retirement) to .75 in European Studies. By 2018, more than a third of the faculty will have arrived since 2010. (While these data are also reflected in **Data Form 5.1**, several fractional positions are represented by different individuals in the numbers above.)

Recruitment: To promote the creation of a more diverse faculty, the dean of the faculty has launched a series of conversations and workshops for chairs and the full faculty to foster more inclusive applicant pools and, with the CEP, has streamlined processes for target-of-opportunity hires. A new webpage for prospective faculty has been launched.⁹ Through the vigorous efforts of departments, the proportion of entering colleagues from underrepresented groups is approximately double that of the existing faculty.

Faculty development: Pursuant to the CAP recommendations, support for sabbatical leaves has been increased such that all assistant professors after reappointment are supported 100% for a year, and all senior faculty are eligible to apply to raise the assured 80% support for scheduled leaves to 100%, subject to the approval of a research project by the Committee of Six. With the advent of larger cohorts, programming for new faculty has become more feasible. In 2012 we began what will be an annual faculty-led January workshop for first- and second-year faculty. Five College programs for mentoring newer faculty are also proving fruitful, as, for example, collaborative workshops for minority faculty led by Dr. Kerry Ann Rockquemore in 2012. We have also had success with programs to develop prospective faculty before tenure-line hires by dissertation and post-doc fellowships. Programs to develop faculty skills in teaching and advising have been well subscribed: Approximately twenty-five faculty, many of them new to advising, attend the two-day advising workshop in January; the great majority of current and incoming instructors attend the two-day FYS workshop in May; almost a third of the faculty have attended the eight-week pedagogy seminar conducted by the directors of the writing center.

⁹ Webpage for prospective faculty : https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/dean_faculty/faculty_hiring

Appraisal: In response to the CAP recommendation that the teaching of tenured faculty be evaluated in ways comparable to that of assistant professors, the faculty in 2007 voted that each tenured faculty member should annually evaluate at least one course by a method of his/her own choosing. This policy is scheduled for review by the CEP in AY 2012-2013.

As on other campuses, there is unease about workloads and issues of balancing career and life, such as the scheduling of meetings and the availability of childcare. The workshops for newer faculty have been constructive occasions for information sharing. The rate of full and phased retirements has put added pressures on the “sandwich generation” of tenured faculty who now chair departments and preside over our rigorous processes of recruitment, hiring, mentoring and evaluation for untenured colleagues. To get an accurate and comprehensive profile of faculty job satisfaction and attitudes, with comparison to peer institutions, we are participating with the Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE) of the Harvard School of Education in conducting a survey of all tenure-line faculty and all long-term untenured faculty in AY 2012-2013. Dr. Kathleen Trower, director of research for COACHE, led a workshop on recruiting and mentoring diverse faculty for department chairs in October, 2012.

Projections: We have set a goal of increasing faculty diversity at a level that meets or exceeds the pace of peer institutions, with a full review by 2017 at the latest of our success in recruitment and in increasing a supportive environment for faculty from a range of backgrounds. It can be anticipated that the strategic planning project will pay central attention to questions of faculty workload, working conditions, and compensation (see **Chapter V**).

Standard Six: Students

Admission and financial aid

Description: As projected in 2008, we have:

- maintained our need-blind admission policy and no-loan financial aid policy and extended those to include international students;
- increased the size of the student body from approximately 425 students per class to 465 students per class, made possible by the building of new dormitory space and by the hiring of additional faculty; and
- increased our international student population to approximately 9% of the student body.

For the entering first-year class, increased outreach to underserved populations has produced a demonstrably stronger domestic applicant pool and allowed the college to expand the diversity of the student body while also raising the credentials of entering students. Self-identified domestic students of color now constitute 42% of the student body, and the percentage within each sub-population group has also increased: As of AY 2012-13, 10% of the entering class self-identified as African-American, 14% as Asian-American, 10% as Latino/a, and 7% as multiracial; an additional 10% of the most recent entering class are non-US citizens, representing 27

countries. Socio-economic diversity has also continued to be a priority, with more than 20% of our students coming from low-income families and qualifying for Pell grants (22.7% as of 2011-12). These changes have all occurred without lowering the academic quality of the class (as measured by reader ratings and SAT scores (Critical Reading scores in 2012-13 averaged 713, mean Math scores 713). Although the financial downturn briefly threatened the turn towards need-blind admission of international students and the loan-free financial aid policy, the faculty committee on admission and financial aid (FCAFA) advised that all three policies be continued. The trustees ultimately determined that the financial projections could support all three programs. In a parallel development, outreach to community college students and military veterans has doubled the number applying for transfer programs, and the college has assumed the cost of recruitment, which was initially funded by the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation.

Appraisal: Assisted by the IR office, the admission office now has a functioning database that permits the office to track applications, admit rate, yield rate, SAT scores, and academic success across a range of background characteristics, including gender, race/ethnicity, citizenship, legacy status, and family income (Pell grant recipients). As of 2012, a further alignment with the registrar's database allows us to examine each sub-population and compare their incoming credentials with their academic performance (first-year GPA, subsequent GPA), persistence rates within a prospective major, choice of major, graduation rates, course enrollments, and graduate and professional degrees. This aggregated information allows us to do a much more fine-grained analysis of how admission decisions relate to student outcomes. As a further check, the dean of admission participates in Committee on Academic Standing (CAS) meetings, and FCAFA periodically reviews and tracks academic achievement for each reader-rating cohort to ensure admissions decisions are appropriate. We have responded to our changing student body's needs by adding a new position in the dean of students office to support low income and international students, as well as military veterans and community college transfers.

Projection: We will continue to monitor student outcomes and to consider how best to respond, for example, to the any patterns of higher attribution (see **Chapter IV, Section A**). We will also continue to study the *Fisher vs. University of Texas* case and its potential impact on recruitment and selection of underrepresented minorities and low-income students.

Student life

Description: Student life programs are presided over by the office of the dean of students, with important sectors of student activities organized by the department of athletics (reporting to the dean of the faculty), and—a major addition since 2008—the CCE (reporting to the president). The dean of students administers nine units: residential life, the counseling center, health services, the career center, student activities (Keefe Campus Center), religious life, health education, the fellowships office, and study abroad. Over the last five years, three broad areas have received particular scrutiny and development:

- leadership and service;
- academic and personal support;

- conduct.

Leadership training: The college's mission statement concludes with the claim that our "graduates link learning with leadership—in service to the College, to their communities, and to the world beyond." Over the last five years, the college has moved to a much higher level of intentionality in supporting this outcome. As before, students take broad responsibility as members of college committees, in running the more than 140 student organizations and in serving as resident counselors, health educators, peer counselors, and peer advocates for sexual respect. In the past five years the CCE and department of athletics have addressed the connection of leadership and service far more directly:

- Community engagement: With a mission of fostering education through service and an objective of developing leadership, the CCE opened its doors in 2007 and has come to engage approximately a third of the student body regularly and another third occasionally. The number of CBL courses has grown from a handful in 2007 to two dozen in AY 2011-2012; they have a keyword on the online course builder for registration. The CCE and career center have partnered to strengthen internships by the hiring of an internship manager. The Amherst Select Internship Program has now offers some five-hundred internships sponsored by alumni, parents, or friends of the college.
- Amherst LEADS: The Amherst LEADS program for varsity athletes was launched to develop leadership skills in athletics, academics, and later life. The program was developed through focus groups and has continued to use such systematic consultation about students' needs and interests and about program effectiveness as it has scaled from (1) captains, to (2) juniors and seniors, and to (3) first-year students, with a planned extension to (4) students other than varsity athletes. The program now involves almost a quarter of the student body.

Academic support: In 2008-2009 a task force on academic support comprising faculty and admission-, student-, and faculty- deans reviewed advising and support for international students, community college transfer students, and underprepared students in math and science. With the assistance of the IR office, they surveyed faculty, interviewed international students, and examined programs of peer institutions. They also reviewed data on the effectiveness of the "intensive" sections in introductory chemistry, economics, and mathematics courses, comparing outcomes within and across groups; reviewed a student survey on the "intensive" sections; and examined the use and effectiveness of the tutoring programs (peer tutors, Q-center tutors, writing center counselors). The task force made a score of recommendations, which have, with minor exceptions, been adopted. Most important was the appointment of a dean of academic support and student research. Other recommendations included expanding orientation and workshops for transfer and international students, enhancing academic support programs, and embedding academic support in the FYS program. Further enhancements include the appointment of an international student-life fellow, the piloting of an academic mentoring program for international students, and the revision of transfer student orientation.

Student conduct: Partly in response to an increase in academic integrity offenses, peaking at more than twenty per year, the college adopted an honor code in 2004, which was revoked in 2008 and 2012; over the last five years, the average has been fourteen cases per year. To inform new students fully about our honor system and codes (intellectual responsibility and respect for persons), a program of extended orientation was launched in 2011, in which new students are required to attend a series of four weekly evening meetings run by deans, faculty members, and coaches. To enforce our codes, the new position of dean of student conduct was created in 2011 and expanded to fulltime in 2012 to revise, update, and implement policies and practices and revise the student handbook. We strive for greater transparency regarding our response to alcohol and other drug (AOD) violations, and violations of the code of conduct specific to sexual respect (in keeping with federal Title IX legislation) (see below under *Integrity*). To those ends, we have created a medical amnesty statement to encourage students to request medical assistance for emergencies involving AOD, and we have developed a consent-based statement for sexual misconduct. To comply with the Drug Free Schools Act, we have strengthened our record-keeping on AOD sanctions and student conduct records. In keeping with national best practices, a student life sub-group initiated the creation of a bias-incident response protocol.

Appraisal: In close collaboration with the faculty, the office of the dean of students has been vigorously responsive to the rapidly changing needs of the new generation of students. However, student life programs have generally not been coordinated with the academic planning initiatives from 2002 onward – a need to be addressed by the strategic planning project. Various crucial areas of student life have been closely reviewed:

Mental health: In keeping with national practices in addressing student suicide prevention, we created a two-year mental health task force in September of 2010 with the two-year goal of creating a strategic plan to support student mental health more actively. This group of faculty, deans, coaches, and students conducted two dozen focus groups of students, staff, and faculty. A public health analysis model was then applied to the results in order to propose prevention, intervention and treatment strategies. One immediate result of this self-assessment and planning was to integrate Student Support Network training (a suicide-prevention model) into some student leader orientations, bolstering our prevention model of suicide prevention for students and staff from the QPR Institute. Further recommendations from that plan have now been shared with the dean of students and the president. In the summer of 2012, a \$299,709 grant was awarded to Amherst by the US Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration for campus suicide prevention efforts over the next three years. This will allow us to hire a part-time public health educator and enhance wellness and suicide-prevention programming.

Student conduct: In the fall of 2012 student concern over the handling of sexual misconduct complaints led to an intensive campus-wide discussion of current disciplinary practices and of the behaviors, including alcohol use, that lead to sexual misconduct. The issue was the focus of multiple open meetings, a meeting of the board of trustees, and a day-long retreat attended by

68% of students, faculty, and staff, in which the issue of sexual respect was discussed in the context of our central commitments to community and individual responsibility. The Sexual Misconduct Oversight Committee was appointed, comprising trustees, faculty, students, and members of the staff and administration and will report in January of 2013. Throughout, the college has sought for public transparency in addressing this issue and our responses to it.¹⁰

Projections: In both the shorter and longer term, student life will be a central institutional focus. As noted, the oversight committee on sexual misconduct will report early in 2013. The work of the mental health task force will continue at least through the three years of the federal grant. Organizational questions will be addressed by the redefinition of the office of dean of students as part of the hiring process in AY 2012-2013. The task force on student life of the strategic planning project will address a broad range of issues, including administrative organization, programming (particularly in supporting diversity and a climate of respect on campus), facilities, the articulation and assessment of learning goals, and processes of self-evaluation (see **Chapter V**).

Standard Seven: Library and Other Information Resources

In keeping with the college mission statement's affirmation that students "assume substantial responsibility for undertaking inquiry and for shaping their education within and beyond the curriculum," the faculty in 2012 adopted "proficiency in using information resources" among the central learning goals of general education. All but a handful of departments stipulated that goal for their majors (see **Table E1, Part A**), sometimes in the category of "research," and sometimes in discipline-specific ways.¹¹ Learning assessment in relationship to these goals (*Library and Other Information Resources*, 7.9 and 7.10) is addressed in **Chapter IV, Section C**.

In the last five years, both the library and the IT department have re-examined and reformulated their support of this goal and undertaken broader roles in instruction and in planning for the science center and other facilities. Both units, which are dealt with separately below, are under new leadership.

Library

Description: A new librarian of the college, Bryn Geffert, was appointed in 2010, and is completing a major reorganization in order to keep pace with rapid changes in information resources and use, as well as in instruction and assessment in the college.

¹⁰ Sexual respect and Title IX website: https://www.amherst.edu/aboutamherst/sexual_respect

¹¹ Examples of departmental learning goals concerning proficiency in using information resources: (e.g., chemistry: "Navigate the chemical literature effectively to retrieve specific information and to inform broader research questions; critically assess the experimental design, results, and conclusions of articles published in the primary literature"; American Studies: "Capable of interpreting sources that are written, visual, material, and, at least to some extent, aural.")

- Department of research and instruction: The reference department has been fundamentally repurposed to collaborate with faculty members in for-credit courses and to provide instruction in small-group and one-on-one settings. The new instruction librarians also bring and continue to develop expertise in learning assessment. In AY 2011-2012, they and the special collections librarians worked with 168 classes (up significantly from an average of 94 classes during the previous three years), including almost half of the FYS sections. They also conducted intensive research consultations, each typically lasting about an hour, with 84 students. They fielded an additional 2,100 individual inquiries about research and resources at the reference desk.
- Department of digital programs: This new department focuses on increasing access to unique and rare materials from the archives and elsewhere in the college through digitization, acquisition of born-digital content, and collaborative development of systems for the discovery, access, and preservation of digital collections in order to support digital scholarship and the curriculum.
- Amherst College Press: The library is leading a six-institution task force commissioned by the Oberlin Group to investigate the feasibility and advisability of founding a rigorous, scholarly, open-access press funded and run by liberal-arts college libraries. Grant funding is currently being sought. Independently, the library is doing the groundwork for the online Amherst College Press.

To respond to the escalating expense of serials subscriptions, the librarians, after consultation with the faculty library committee and with the full faculty, are experimenting with a selective balance of subscriptions and per-item ordering. The library maintains its commitment to a print collection, despite impending space constraints. We continue to spend more per student on collections than any other liberal arts college in the country.

Appraisal: The sharp increase in instructional activity, as initiated by faculty and students, demonstrates a timely response to major curricular and pedagogical needs. The extensive integration of librarians into classroom instruction marks an important innovation in our teaching culture.

Projections: The science library will be prominently positioned in the main entry floor of the new science building and will enjoy state-of-the-art facilities, including teaching and collaborative space. The replacement of Frost Library and the college's continuing needs for library facilities in the digital age will be considered by the strategic planning project in AY 2012-2014.

Information Technology

Description: A new director, Gayle Barton, was hired in July, 2012, in the reformulated position of chief information officer (CIO), reporting to the president and serving on her senior staff. In 2010 the trustees appointed an ad hoc digital strategy committee to supplement the work of the instruction committee and other board committees in assuring that the college

remains current with developments in IT. The faculty computing committee and other college committees ensure that IT works in alignment with the needs and goals of the community.

The department has supported major transitions affecting all students and faculty:

- Online course registration (2009-2011): The transition from paper required broad and continuing consultation with student, faculty, and administrative users, as well as over-night fixes during the roll-out (see Chapter II, **Special Emphasis Five**).
- Moodle (2012): For a learning management system, the college has shifted to Moodle from Blackboard and our self-designed CMS system. 70% of courses were using Moodle for the fall of 2012 for something more than just eReserves.
- Classrooms: Nearly all classrooms have computer presentation systems. Upgrades to HD (high-definition) have begun. Interactive classroom technologies are being rolled out, such as personal response systems and the ability to project from an iPad.
- Instruction: In collaboration with faculty members from across the curriculum, the academic technology services (ATS) unit has supported innovative projects for credit-bearing, interterm, and summer courses.¹²

In addition, there have been numerous updates in administrative computing. Advancement moved from Datatel Benefactor to Datatel Colleague, since the previous product was no longer being supported. Much of the college reporting moved from ASG Safari to SAP Business Objects to give administrative departments better tools and to allow them more access to their own data. The college web site has been rebuilt to use current design techniques for ADA compliance and for use on mobile devices.

Demand for both user and project support continues to grow. Calls to the helpdesk and requests for workshops or in-person assistance have increased. The variety and complexity of devices supported and demands on the wireless network have all increased significantly. The increased use of Macintosh computers and mobile devices is putting a strain on the helpdesk's ability to provide an adequate level of support. The only area in which there has been a reduction in demand is the phone system. Students no longer have landline service in the residence hall rooms (with an exception for persons with disabilities where a landline is required). Incoming and outgoing calls have decreased in number and duration, although the college continues to deploy office phones as new positions are created.¹³

Staff:

IT staffing has been exceptionally stable over the past five years. One new position was added in Database Services to support data reporting using SAP's Business Objects. Open positions

¹² ATS projects: <https://www.amherst.edu/offices/it/projects/atsprojects>.

¹³ 2012 IT Index: <https://www.amherst.edu/offices/it/about/2012index>.

were frozen during the economic downturn but filled after the worst had passed. Staff turnover has been 21% for the five years, or an average of 4% per year. Professional development remains a high priority as the demand for Mac support grows, consumerization of IT explodes, and the nature of the infrastructure evolves, especially as regards virtualization of servers, storage, and desktops. Developing the next generation of IT leaders and staff diversity remain concerns.

In the coming five years, we anticipate staffing needs in several areas. It is critical that we improve our technical support for the Macintosh operating system. Students bring Macs in a 2:1 Mac/PC ratio, and two-thirds of new faculty this year requested Macs. Administrative staff are beginning to request them. College support for multimedia development is fragmented and needs to be stronger and more cohesive. Innovative pedagogies such as blended learning, “flipped classrooms,” and lecture capture will need support, both in assisting faculty and in project development. Data analytics and reporting require broad deployment across the campus to be most effective. It is not clear to what extent we can reassign or retrain current staff to meet these needs. What is clear is that hiring for deeper technical skill should be a part of every staffing opportunity within IT, and should be an important consideration across the administrative offices.

Appraisal: In preparation for hiring a CIO, a visiting committee was charged in the spring of 2011 with reviewing the aspects of IT that needed improvement. The report drew on a comprehensive opportunity assessment of IT collaboration for the Five Colleges done by Goldstein and Associates (February, 2011) and on the ten-year strategic plan of the Five Colleges, Inc. (December, 2010), with extensive attention to IT.

The review entailed a team visit in February, 2011; their report in March; and a follow-up report from the IT staff in May after review of the recommendations. As hoped for, both the new president and the new CIO arrived with all aspects of IT under active discussion. The visiting team recommended attention to the following areas:

- Mission: What is the role of IT in teaching, learning, and research? Is it a “service culture” and how can this be communicated? What should be IT’s role in relation to the library? To the Five Colleges?
- Governance and organization: How do decisions get made and priorities set? What are the roles and responsibilities of the various units? How can overlaps and ambiguities with other units (e.g., advancement) be resolved?
- Planning and evaluation: How are strategic decisions made (e.g., about the priority on open-source software)?
- Communication: How can IT communicate its mission and procedures to the wider community and process feedback from users?

Some actions recommended by the team were in the process of implementation (e.g. the shift to Moodle, clarifying functions with advancement); some were adopted (e.g., making the CIO a

presidential report). Others, such as clarifying the central teaching mission of IT, reach into areas that we believed to have resolved already in our 2008 self-study.

Given the importance of IT for all aspects of the college's mission and our late start in some areas, we recognize the importance of regular and unsparing self-evaluation with participation by the trustees, administrators (through the managers' council), faculty (through the faculty computing committee), and students (through the student computing committee).

Projections: The new CIO has undertaken a year-long strategic planning effort to mesh with the college's larger effort of 2012-2014. IT staff are meeting with faculty, staff, and students, monitoring trends, and reviewing existing documents and quantitative information from different sources. Areas identified in the external review will receive special attention, and the department's effectiveness will be reviewed with the manager's council and the faculty computing committee. So far, the college support for innovative pedagogies and multimedia creation have been identified as areas that need additional support.

Standard Eight: Physical and Technological Resources

Description: Despite the 2008 downturn, we have undertaken the most pressing projects: the replacement of obsolete facilities from the 1960s (the Merrill Science Center and the four east campus dorms, with some 320 beds), expansion office space for the faculty, and completion of the residential master plan. We have responded to the need for a campus-wide integrated planning process noted by the Commission's visiting team in 2008 by forming a facilities planning committee, chaired by the president. We have made important progress in environmental health and safety, including emergency preparedness.

Science center: The facilities planning committee coordinated a network of nine overlapping committees of faculty, trustees, students, and administrators, as well as consultation with the CPR and CEP and with the campus community through open meetings. Construction was authorized in 2011, to be completed in 2017.¹⁴ The phases of construction and the impact on the campus are well publicized.¹⁵ The new facility will be administered by an associate-dean-level coordinator and a faculty advisory committee with representation from the resident departments, as well as geology, computer science, and mathematics.

Other academic space: Pursuant to the CAP recommendations, Shepley Bulfinch created a space-use framework to address resources and needs in respect to classrooms and offices (2010). Expansion space for humanities and social sciences will be provided by the re-purposing of the McGuire Life Sciences Building (51,000 sq. ft.), when the biology department moves to the new science center, and by office space in Converse Hall (4,900 sq. ft.) made available when public

¹⁴ Science center rationale and planning process: https://www.amherst.edu/aboutamherst/science_center

¹⁵ Science center construction phases:

https://www.amherst.edu/aboutamherst/science_center/construction_updates

affairs, human resources, and investment move to the former Fiber Arts Building on the Amherst Common, acquired in 2008 and currently being renovated and expanded. The need to upgrade library facilities, as reported in our 2008 self-study and analyzed by a comprehensive planning effort in 2008-2009, is on hold during the current construction phase, though the library has received cosmetic improvements and some repurposing of space for current programming.

Dormitories: After the 2008 downturn, the projects in process (Seeley and Hitchcock¹⁶) were finished in 2009, but other projects were delayed. The renovation and expansion of Seligman will be completed in 2013. To enable construction of the science center, neighboring Davis Dormitory has been demolished. Planning will begin soon for replacement of the east campus dormitories after the completion of the science center in 2017 and is a top priority.

Pratt Football Field: The long-recognized inadequacy of the football field and track and the small, outmoded field house found an unexpected solution in 2012-2013 through a consortium of donors, who donated funds for an artificial turf field, adequate lighting, and a field house adequate to the numerous intercollegiate and club sports that use the field.¹⁷

Administrative offices: After being split between on-campus offices and off-campus rental locations, advancement operations were consolidated on a single campus on the edge of the main campus by the renovation of three former faculty houses (Smith, Scott, and Pontypool).¹⁸

Emergency preparedness and notification: In 2008 we instituted a comprehensive emergency notification system (landlines, cell phones, e-mail, siren) and made all classrooms lockable from the inside.¹⁹ The devastating snowstorm and week-long regional power outage of October-November 2011 tested our preparedness, with an overall positive and instructive outcome. All students were accommodated safely and with a reasonable degree of comfort. With the help of generators, the dining hall was opened at once to students, faculty, and residents of the surrounding community. Classes resumed after two missed days. Intensive review of our response by the trustees and by the administration led to the revamping of procedures and to plans to provide emergency power generation for the whole campus through the co-generation plant. The college's emergency preparedness plans, policies, and procedures are constantly updated and well publicized.²⁰ Senior staff receive regular trainings.

Environmental health and safety (EH&S): The department has been increased by one full time position to 3.5 FTEs to respond to current and anticipated changes in the regulatory

¹⁶ Seelye and Hitchcock renovations:

https://www.amherst.edu/offices/facilities/capital_projects/completed_projects/seelye_hitchcock

¹⁷ Pratt field reconstruction: <https://www.amherst.edu/aboutamherst/projects/prattfield>.

¹⁸ Advancement offices consolidation:

https://www.amherst.edu/offices/facilities/capital_projects/completed_projects/advancement_offices

¹⁹ Emergency notification:

https://www.amherst.edu/offices/enviro_health_safety/emergency_prep/ac_alert.

²⁰ Emergency preparedness site: https://www.amherst.edu/offices/enviro_health_safety/emergency_prep

environment climate and to best practices in higher education. EH&S provides weekday coverage during the academic year from 6:00 AM to 8:00 PM and 24/7 emergency response. Policies, procedures, and programs are accessible online.²¹ The unit has built capacity to respond to an unprecedented level of construction on campus. The audit management plan of EH&S is regularly updated and posted online.²²

Appraisal: The residential master plan (2000 onwards) provided a useful model for the scale and complexity of science center planning, with the accompanying developments in academic and residential space. The campus-wide discussions of institutional priorities from 2002 onward allowed planning to proceed even during a period of financial uncertainty, with review by the ABC. The college has made effective use of external consultants (e.g., Payette for the science center; Shepley Bulfinch for library and academic space).

In overseeing science center planning and other recent projects, the facilities planning committee has achieved more extensive coordination among the department of facilities planning and management, the buildings and grounds committee of the board of trustees, the IR office, the IT department, the library, the offices of the deans of the faculty and of students, and standing faculty committees. Planning has proceeded with rigorous attention to the educational mission of the college and of academic departments.

The disparities between the newest and most outmoded of our classrooms, dormitories, and offices are large, but the least-advantaged users have shown patience, given steady progress toward renewal. Notification of disruptions caused by construction is timely, clear, and accessible.²³ The scale of current commitments constrains our address to other facilities needs, and the shift to high-tech buildings will entail significantly higher maintenance costs.

Projections: Over the next five years, the college's commitments for capital projects are largely set. Given the scale of construction, maintaining functioning will be a challenge. The strategic planning project will include in its first year the creation of a campus assessment plan by outside architects, which will address the needs and options for housing and for the library, arts facilities, offices, and classrooms (see **Chapter V**).

Standard Nine: Financial Resources

Description: The college's financial resources continue to be strong. The turbulence in the financial markets over the past five years has been unprecedented, but the college has

²¹ EH&S policies, procedures, and programs: https://www.amherst.edu/offices/enviro_health_safety/polpro.

²² EH&S audit management plan: https://www.amherst.edu/offices/enviro_health_safety/polpro/overview/audit_management#scope.

²³ Notification on construction and other work: <https://www.amherst.edu/offices/facilities>.

weathered the storm by prudent spending, strong investment oversight, and alumni support. In 2008 we launched a comprehensive campaign with a goal of \$425 million, which has now surpassed \$446 million. We continue to raise funds for the operating needs of the college and the new science center. The support of our alumni and friends is one of the keys to our financial success.

The college's endowment provides a significant amount of operating support (47%). On June 30, 2012, endowment assets totaled \$1.6 billion and represented over \$900,000 of endowment per student. The investment portfolio consists of a broad mix of assets, including domestic equities, foreign equities, private equities, fixed income, absolute return, natural resources, cash, and other investments. Spending on the endowment is measured against the three-year average of endowment market value and is expected to fall within a range of 3.5–5.0%. During the economic crisis and the period covered by the recommendations of the ABC, the trustees allowed for the spending rate to exceed 5%. Due to the savings that were achieved and investment performance, the college did not exceed the 5% rate. Currently the rate is 4.6%.

Due to the increased complexity of the endowment and the needed management, staffing has been increased in this area. Currently the office has a chief investment officer, two fund managers, an operations manager, and a support staff member. The office also employs various student interns. The trustees' investment committee continues to provide active oversight of the portfolio, meeting regularly with the investment office staff.

The college's operating budget totals \$149 million and is supported on an annual basis through various revenue sources. The first source is net tuition, and room and board receipts (38.5%). Next is distribution from the endowment (47%). Annual gifts and grants to the college account for approximately 10%, including the Alumni Fund, which is annually supported by over 57% of the alumni body. The remaining revenue is primarily from rental housing and summer conferences utilizing college facilities. The college continues to carry a contingency into the annual operating budget in order to meet any unforeseen expenditures or emergencies.

As a result of the economic downturn, the college revamped its budget presentation, making it more comparable to the audited financial statements of the institution. The budget now presents student revenue net of scholarship awards, has removed agency transactions (PELL and SEOG) from revenues and expenses, and includes all debt service as an operating expense. This change has added to the transparency of our financial budget and annual expenditures. Historic information presented to the board of trustees and the college community has been modified to show a consistent presentation. In addition, in 2011 the board modified the approval process so that the budget for the following fiscal year is now approved at the May meeting—in advance of the fiscal year it relates to.

In coordination with the formulation of the budget, the board reviews projections that include the ten years following the budget year. These fully integrated projections include rate increase assumptions for the comprehensive fee and return on endowment assets. They also include a calculation of the spending from endowment, debt service, and inflationary expenditure growth factors for all expenditures, with specific calculations for financial aid, salary pools, and

employee fringe benefits. A similar set of projections that integrates sources and specific uses of funds for capital expenditures was developed in 2004. These projections were also modified for the new budget format and simplified to focus more on the assumptions that are used and the impact of changes in those assumptions. The new projection model also added a focus on the per-student costs projected into the future.

Annual growth areas of the budget continue to be: financial aid (with 52% of students currently on aid); sustained focus on hiring and retaining the best faculty at competitive compensation levels; and maintaining competitive salaries for staff and administrative employees. In connection with the science center and other ongoing construction projects, the college issued debt in the fall of 2012. The cost of servicing this debt will increase the operating budget.

The comptroller's office continues to work closely with the trustees' audit committee. In addition to financial statement review, the audit committee has also taken on the review of the college's Form 990 and meets regularly with the Five College risk manager in order to remain current on risks that are affecting the college. As of the college's FY 2009 tax filing, the IRS Form 990 was completely revamped, requiring us to put into place many policies and best practices. It also requires that we track expenditures in new ways and make expanded disclosures. This additional oversight by the trustees and the IRS has helped management to think about governance in new ways and to track information so that it is easily accessible and reportable.

Appraisal: Due to the size and complexity of the investment portfolio, performance is monitored closely with monthly reports that are provided to senior management and the trustees' investment committee. In addition, the investment office will be moving to new offices in FY14. Staffing of that office is reviewed on an ongoing basis in order to ensure that appropriate levels of staffing are in place to support the underlying investments.

The preparation of projections has helped to identify timing of major projects and the funding available for them. Projections are typically prepared using conservative assumptions that help to keep the budget growing at a predictable and steady pace, rather than growing and declining as revenue sources fluctuate. The result is that priorities are discussed and funded as needed.

An important aspect of the projections is a review of the spending rate on the endowment. By maintaining the spending rate at a prudent level and allowing it to fluctuate within a range of 3% to 5% of the three-year average endowment value, the college has been able to control the allocation of funds to the budget without significantly increasing or reducing the distribution based on single-year changes in value. Maintaining this spending rate will be a challenge in the future as market turbulence prevails.

Projections: The college is currently searching for a treasurer / chief financial and administrative officer. Hiring an innovative leader for the finance area will result in a close look at all of the functions that fall under this area, especially our projection models, to be sure that we are making decisions today that make sense for tomorrow.

The investment committee and investment office will continue to monitor the portfolio and the markets for opportunities. The board will continue to be involved in budget projection and decision making. Projections are reviewed regularly and are modified as needed to maintain a reasonable spending rate. Maintaining the spending rate within the stated range will be a particular challenge in the future as market turbulence prevails. We will continue to include a contingency fund in annual operating budgets in order to maintain flexibility for unforeseen events. The trustees' audit committee will continue to review the major financial reports that the college issues and to monitor risks that may affect the financial health of the institution. They will also continue to review significant operating areas in order to ensure that appropriate control procedures and high ethical standards are in place.

As part of the strategic planning project, a financial outlook working group will review our financial model, with a focus on new and diverse revenue sources (see **Chapter V**).

Standard Ten: Public Disclosure

Description: The college strives to present information to its various on-campus, alumni, and public audiences that is clear, accurate, and accessible (**Data Form 10**). Access has changed profoundly over the past five years because of the proliferation of content types (text, video, audio, photography), media formats (college website, print publications, social media outlets), and device platforms (PCs, Macs, smart phones, laptops, iPads). To cite one telling example, in response to intense campus concern about the handling of sexual misconduct, a comprehensive website entitled "Title IX and Sexual Respect" was launched within days, which strives for a high level of transparency about the college's response to these issues.²⁴

Our website remains a central conduit to external audiences and the campus community. Growing familiarity with the content management system (CMS) has led to the posting of more key information by more users about news and the continuing workings of the institution. For example, during the economic downturn, information about Amherst and the economy was provided regularly (in formats that included video, audio and written documents) to the public, and more detailed password-protected information was provided to the campus community.²⁵ Biographical profiles for trustees have been added to the college website.²⁶ The college catalog is available online in interactive format and in e-book format; it also remains available in print in a reduced print run.²⁷ We support access to educational resources, such as images of the 16,000 works in the Mead Art Museum in a searchable catalogue (to be completed in 2015). The new position of digital programs librarian will make archival material and other Amherst resources

²⁴ Title IX and Sexual Respect: https://www.amherst.edu/aboutamherst/sexual_respect

²⁵ Amherst and the economy: <https://www.amherst.edu/aboutamherst/economy>.

²⁶ Trustee biographies: <https://www.amherst.edu/aboutamherst/trustees/biographies>.

²⁷ College catalogue: https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/registrar/AC_Course_Info_tools/ac_catalog.

available online. The website's capacity for displaying multimedia content allows for extensive coverage of major college news, such as the construction of the science center.²⁸ Speeches by the president, faculty, and distinguished visitors to campus are posted on the college's extensive multimedia content collection, as is other multimedia content, such as videos and audio interviews.²⁹

The college website is continuously refined by the office of public affairs. New features added have included a redesigned multimedia page to better show the breadth and richness of our content; a redesigned Amherst Magazine homepage to make content more compelling and visible;³⁰ the addition of our social media links, including President Martin's well-read Twitter feed³¹ on the college homepage; a comprehensive, easy-to-read events calendar; an audio-slideshow virtual campus tour;³² a newly designed homepage features three stories in one interactive panel; and a mobile-friendly version of the Amherst site.

The office of public affairs generates a biweekly e-newsletter that features news from campus and alumni and is distributed to the college's 21,000 alumni. The office also maintains the college homepage, and seeks to represent an array of compelling stories about the college, in formats that include a combination of text, video, audio, and photography. The college's sports information department not only covers the college's twenty-seven sports teams but also chronicles the compelling stories of athletically and academically talented student-athletes. The public affairs staff also maintain the bulk of the college's social media presence, posting regularly on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram. That office is also aggressive in identifying compelling stories that are emblematic of Amherst's core values and seeks to place those stories in top-tier media outlets by pursuing a sophisticated media outreach strategy.

Learning goals and student success: Information on retention and graduation rates (in the common data set), as well as admission statistics, costs, and financial aid is conveniently available on the "Amherst at a Glance" page.³³ The learning goals for the liberal studies curriculum are displayed on the top page of the "Academics" section.³⁴ The learning goals for all majors are available through the websites of academic departments.³⁵ In the past five years, department websites have become far more comprehensive, and many departments maintain pages for information from and about their graduates.

²⁸ Science center: https://www.amherst.edu/aboutamherst/science_center.

²⁹ Multimedia content: <https://www.amherst.edu/aboutamherst/news/multimedia>.

³⁰ Amherst Magazine website: <https://www.amherst.edu/aboutamherst/magazine>.

³¹ President Martin's Twitter feed: https://ja.twitter.com/Biddy_Martin.

³² Virtual campus tour: <https://www.amherst.edu/aboutamherst/visiting/virtualtour>.

³³ "Amherst at a Glance": <https://www.amherst.edu/aboutamherst/glance>.

³⁴ Liberal studies curriculum: <https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife>.

³⁵ Learning goals for majors:

https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/dean_faculty/general_information/nesacaccreditation2013/goalsfor majors

Emergency information: We have increased our capacity to inform the campus and the public about emergencies. The college website is a key component of emergency response and communications, with password-protected emergency response plans posted online.³⁶ Meanwhile, during campus emergencies such as the spread of the H1N1 virus in 2009 and the extensive flooding of the college's iconic Johnson Chapel, which displaced faculty in 2012, the website has conveyed time-sensitive information to the college community.³⁷

Appraisal: The college takes seriously the responsibility of presenting itself honestly to the on-campus community, as well as the more than 21,000 living alumni, 8,000 annual applicants for admission and their families, and 20,000 campus visitors per year. The details of academic goals and measures of student learning, other than retention and graduation, have until recently been less well reported than other aspects of college life, and need greater explicitness.

Projections: Going forward, the college expects to continue to generate compelling content by identifying and presenting the most compelling stories that reinforce core values across various formats and platforms. The office of public affairs, working with IT, is currently involved in efforts to develop mobile phone applications and is engaged in a continuous effort to maximize use of the college website, using a "responsive design" strategy that aims to make the website and content available on as many platforms as possible from iPads to iPhones, from laptops to desktops. During AY 2012-2013, the offices of IR, IT, and public affairs will investigate how audiences use the college website and affiliated social media. Individuals from these groups are developing an inventory of existing Amherst-affiliated social media accounts and establishing web traffic metrics to include in future reporting.

Standard Eleven: Integrity

Description: With the overarching goals of protecting academic freedom and creating a climate of respect for all on campus, the college has responded to the evolving legal and regulatory climate and the changing needs of our students. Four areas have received particular attention:

Non-discrimination: In 2010 students submitted a proposal to revise the college's non-discrimination policy to include gender identity and gender expression. After consideration by college committees, the trustees in October, 2011, approved a revised policy, which adds "gender identity or gender expression" to other protected categories (**Data Form 11**). Similarly, in March, 2012, residential life instituted a gender-inclusive housing policy at the urging of students.

³⁶ Emergency preparedness and notification:

https://www.amherst.edu/offices/enviro_health_safety/emergency_prep.

³⁷ H1N1 virus alert: <https://www.amherst.edu/campuslife/health/service/flu/spring2009>; flooding of Johnson Chapel: <https://www.amherst.edu/aboutamherst/news/announcements/13feb2012>.

Respect for persons: In keeping with the college's Statement of Respect for Persons³⁸, we have comprehensively revised our policies and procedures in respect to sexual misconduct in order to assure best practices and full compliance with Federal Title IX. The Title IX coordinator is now assisted by deputies for the following sub-groups: students, athletics, staff, and visitors, and faculty. The college is working with outside counsel to ensure that the college is in full compliance with the requirements of Title IX, the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy, and Campus Crime Statistics Act. All employees with managerial responsibility receive regular trainings. Faculty responsibility is discussed at new faculty orientation and recurrently at TAP lunches. Student conduct has been a particular focus. Procedures for hearing cases related to sexual misconduct by students have been revamped and are described in the student handbook.³⁹ New students attend a mandatory "respect for persons" workshop in orientation. Support and counseling for students involved in disciplinary procedures have been enhanced. This area is under intensive review (see above, under *Students*).

Faculty research: Over the past five years we have codified and strengthened procedures and reporting for the human subjects committee (IRB), institutional animal care and use committee (IACUC), the institutional bio-safety committee, and the radiation safety committee. Descriptions of the committee and pertinent instructions, policies, procedures, and guidelines are posted on the website of the dean of the faculty.⁴⁰

Financial compliance: In 2011 the college established a compliance committee to advise the senior administration by reviewing, evaluating, and coordinating the institution's compliance efforts and to foster a culture of compliance through educational programs and the dissemination of information to the college community. The compliance committee has representation from the offices of the treasurer, comptroller, dean of the faculty, dean of students, facilities, human resources, IT, and the faculty.

Appraisal: The college has made significant progress over the past five years in terms of legal and regulatory compliance and in educational programs for students, faculty, and staff to create a climate of respect for all persons. Student misconduct, and especially sexual misconduct, has received due attention, but as in peer institutions, poses severe challenges because of its connection to alcohol use. A special oversight committee on sexual misconduct has been appointed and will report early in 2013 (see above, under *Students*).

Projections: Review and revision of our codes of conduct and disciplinary procedures will continue with the assistance of outside counsel, in tandem with enhanced educational programs for faculty and for staff, as well as for students within and beyond new student orientation.

³⁸ Statement of Respect for Persons:

https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/dean_faculty/fph/policies/respect.

³⁹ Student handbook: <https://www.amherst.edu/campuslife/deanstudents/handbook>.

⁴⁰ Compliance committees site:

https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/dean_faculty/faccommittees/irb_iacuc.

Chapter IV: Assessment, Retention, and Student Success

This chapter addresses the suggested areas of the Educational Effectiveness format in the following order:

- A. Measures of student success;
- B. What students gain as a result of their education;
- C. Assessment of student learning, incorporating *Special Emphasis Four: Evaluating student learning beyond the class and department level as a cumulative general education achievement.*

A. Measures of student success (*Students, 6.5 – 6.9*)

Overview: Under *Description* we address the continuing evidence for the success of the student body at large. Under *Appraisal* we discuss the comparative success of various sub-groups in our increasingly diverse student body, as per *Students 6.7*—a matter that we have been monitoring for twenty years, but with intensified efforts in the last five years.

Description: As direct measures of student success we use graduation rates, GPA, patterns of selection for majors and courses, and graduate and professional school enrollment. Indirect measures of student success come from our life-cycle survey agenda, which include pre-enrollment, enrolled-student, senior, and alumni surveys—all coordinated to track changes over a student's years at Amherst, as well as post-graduation. The surveys are listed in **Section C.1.b.**

Overall, approximately 95% of the entering cohort of first-time, full-time students is graduated from the college within six years (**Data Form S1**). About 87% are graduated within four years, another 7% within five years, and the final 1-2% by the sixth year. Freshmen retention rates have risen from 94% to 98% since 2009. On average, about 50% of each graduating class completes a senior thesis; in the natural sciences, about 60%. Between 35% and 45% of each class is graduated with two majors (and one or two students a year, with three majors).

National competitions: In keeping with our mission, we honor a range of attainments in learning and leadership. Among institutions enrolling under 3,000 students, in 2012 Amherst ranked second in the country in the number of students (nineteen) selected to participate in Teach for America. Since 2006 Amherst has had one or more winners for all the major prestigious scholarship programs: 2 Rhodes Scholars (9 finalists), 1 Marshall Scholar (6 finalists), 1 Mitchell Scholar, 2 Luce Scholars (2 finalists), 4 Truman Scholars (2 winners in 2012 and an additional 3 finalists since 2006), 3 Churchill Scholars, 3 Gates Scholars, 13 Watson Fellows, and 55 Fulbright Scholars. Among all small liberal arts colleges, Amherst is consistently among the top 10 producers of student Fulbright scholars. Some 36 students have been awarded NSF Graduate Research Fellowships (26 honorable mentions). In addition, since

2006 we have had 4 Beinecke Scholars, 1 Keasbey Scholar to Oxford University, and 7 Goldwater Scholars (7 honorable mentions).

Appraisal:

The Enrollment Management Committee (EMC): The EMC meets each semester to evaluate graduation rates and retention (**Data Form S1**), financial aid (**Data Form 6: Financial Aid, Debt**), and college finances (**Data Form 9**) so as to ensure that the growth in fall admission does not strain available financial, physical, and academic resources. Our continuing high rates of retention and graduation indicate generally effective admission policies and support systems, including faculty advising and the CAS (see below).

Committee on Academic Support (CAS): For formative assessment, students' success and needs, both as individuals and in the aggregate, are monitored through grade and performance reports and are addressed by the timely provision of counseling and support. This is a robust system that entails the participation of all faculty as advisors (see **Chapter II, Special Emphasis Five**) and of all student-life personnel. On the basis of mid-term and semester-end reports from instructors and of final grades, the CAS meets four times a year to evaluate the needs of students reported to be having academic difficulty and to review the progress of those who have previously been put on academic warning or suspension. In order to serve as a clearinghouse for information about problem areas and about the effectiveness of current support programs, the CAS has representation of all the units that have contact with students: namely, the offices of the dean of students, admission, financial aid, and registrar; the various centers (counseling, student activities, career, writing, and quantitative); as well as faculty members from the various divisions and representatives of athletics. This large committee (some 20-25 members) provides holistic evaluation of individuals' difficulties, since almost always some member of the CAS has worked with the student under discussion. The CAS also provides an overview of trends in student life and of the impact of curricular changes.

The improvement of student support programs is an institutional priority. Academic support was reviewed by a task force in 2008-2009, and mental health services have been under active review by another task force from 2010 onward. The entire area of student life is now under active review for reform and reconceptualization (see **Chapter II, Students**, and **Chapter V**). Advising is under review by the faculty (see **Chapter II, Special Emphasis Five**).

We need to look beyond our overall results in order to fulfill our mission to educate exceptional students "from all backgrounds." In keeping with the Commission's expectation of attention to all groups of recruited students (*Students* 6.7), we are focusing on whether we educate all segments of our diverse student body equally well. This is not a new question. Demographic patterns in student performance and in persistence in science and mathematics have long been apparent in the CAS overview, and equity of educational opportunity has been central to all planning initiatives since the Special Committee on the Amherst Education (SCAE) began in 2002. The SCAE posed the hard question of whether the open curriculum is truly open to all; that is, can students from a range of academic backgrounds pursue their interests and career directions in our demanding and highly competitive programs?

In 2008, but too late for our NEASC self-study, a groundbreaking comprehensive study was submitted by the Faculty Committee on Admission and Financial Aid (FCAFA), entitled “A Complicated Success? Assessing Academic Qualifications and Their Place in the Intellectual Life of our Students, with Special Attentive to Diversity Initiatives.” On the basis of extensive internal and comparative research led by a sociologist, this report found that students who are “under”-prepared by conventional metrics generally close the gap in GPA over four years and achieve in ways not captured by simplistic notions of “success,” though some groups remain underrepresented in math and science courses. (Current efforts to improve access in math and science are described in **Chapter II, *Special Emphasis Two***.)

Follow-up research continues: We have intensified and refined our investigation of the distribution of majors across demographic groups as an index of access to the curriculum. We correlate demographic groups (race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status) with admission reader ratings, athlete status, legacy status, and students’ evaluations of their Amherst experience. We aggregate this data annually in department activity reports (DAR) for academic departments as they strive to understand and serve their constituencies (see below, **Section C.2.b**).

In the spring of 2012 we issued the first comprehensive comparison of admission statistics with graduation rates, GPAs, and majors. As part of President Martin’s report to the trustees for their two-day retreat on the challenges of enrolling a diverse student body, this study informed the board’s review of options for improving academic offerings and support. We will repeat this study regularly to monitor the impact of programs addressing perceived shortcomings.

By subscribing to the National Student Clearinghouse we can now track post-Amherst enrollment of students who withdraw, as well as of the 80% or so who proceed to post-graduate study. We seek to address even the small differences in graduation rate for groups with similar admission qualifications. For example, clearinghouse data cast light on a group of students of the same gender, cultural identification, and region who withdrew from Amherst. We found that of this group of fourteen students from four entering cohorts, eight have earned their bachelor’s degree, most commonly at a school proximate to their home town (most of the group have hometowns more than 500 miles away from Amherst).

The top five majors at Amherst have been consistent over the past decade: (in alphabetical order) economics, English, history, political science, and psychology, with biology and environmental studies now edging closer to the list. The five top majors account for about two-thirds of the graduating class. Our large contingent of Pell grant recipients—at over 20%, the highest in our cohort of colleges and universities—are identical with non-recipients in their election of majors. There are also disproportions; e.g., at 9% of the student body, international students take 13–16% of the course enrollments in mathematics, physics and computer science.

In sum, student success remains an issue of intense concern at all institutional levels: the trustees, the faculty (both corporately and through FCAFA), student-life staff, and individual departments. We have refined our research tools by closer tracking of various subgroups and

of post-graduate outcomes. However, our ability to track student outcomes remains limited by the convergence of student GPAs and by our limited ability to assess student learning directly.

Projections: Though our overall graduation rate is among the highest in the country, even small differentials by group need vigorous response. Support services—for both personal and academic needs—will continue to be closely monitored and refined, as will be academic advising. By virtue of their first-hand experience of various student constituencies and their role as change agents, academic departments will continue to play a large role in shaping the assessment agenda and in acting upon findings. Their various initiatives to improve student success in all of the above areas are outlined below in **Section C.2.b**.

B. What students gain as a result of their education

(Planning and Evaluation, 2.7)

Description: With a notably loyal body of some 21,000 living alumni, more than four-fifths of whom remain in contact with the school, Amherst traditionally relies on extensive but informal feedback from our graduates. The intensity of the interaction is indicated by the half or so of academic departments that maintain alumni pages on their websites, some of which are active billboards, while others are directories of graduates' current teaching and other professional posts. Through some department sites a prospective student can survey the publications both of current faculty members and of former majors. Two recent alumni surveys, carried out in 2005 and 2009, show a consistent pattern of graduate and professional school enrollment, graduation, and careers: about 15% of Amherst's graduates go to medical school and become physicians; another 15% go to law school and practice law; 15% go to business school and work in a variety of for-profit and non-profit organizations; and about 20% earn a PhD. The first-time acceptance rate for medical school has over time averaged 79% overall and 90% for "well qualified" candidates.¹ This trend is supported by information collected by the office of alumni and parent programs. The next survey will be made available to all alumni in 2013, and we expect to receive 12,000 responses.

Appraisal: The general impression that our graduates do well for themselves naturally has limited use in guiding improvement or predicting the future. As mentioned above, data from the National Student Clearinghouse allow us to track patterns of post-graduate enrollment and degrees without the inherent biases of self-reporting. One preliminary and heartening indicator is that Pell grant recipients go on to enroll in graduate programs at nearly the same rate as other

¹ Medical school acceptance rates:

<https://www.amherst.edu/campuslife/careers/students/gradstudy/health/guide/part1/chances>

alumni. A central aim of the replacement of loans with grants was to ensure that students can pursue further educational opportunities after graduation without a heavy burden of debt. From the National Student Clearinghouse, we now have a clearer picture of how post-graduate enrollment proceeds year-by-year after the B.A. These figures do not include all US institutions nor any institutions abroad (Data Form S2):

Graduate Schools Attendance for the Classes of 2008-2012

Class	Attended Post-AC Program	No Enrollment Reported*	Class Size
2008	57%	43%	445
2009	50%	50%	419
2010	39%	61%	431
2011	24%	76%	483
2012	12%	88%	442
Grand Total	36%	64%	2,220

Class	Degrees Earned*
2008	94
2009	61
2010	24
2011	6

Another indicator of the value of an Amherst education lies in comparisons with outcomes for the talented cohorts graduated from our peer institutions. To that end, a comparative dashboard of alumni survey results was created in 2009 and shared broadly. Comparisons were made between the two Amherst administrations of the alumni survey for those alumni who were ten years out (2005 and 2009). Because of our valued membership in a consortium of similar institutions, we were also able to make comparisons between our outcomes and those of two groups of peers: highly competitive liberal arts colleges and Ivy League universities.

This particular dashboard focused on advanced degrees (including the impact of high debt, and how well Amherst prepared alumni for graduate or professional school), occupations, and some issues of quality of life (long-term relationships, children, voting, satisfaction with life, standard of living, income, and giving to Amherst). With more than 80% of alumni reporting graduate degrees, Amherst led both cohorts on “any advanced degree.” On the question of proceeding to graduate studies without high undergraduate loans, Amherst did middling-to-well. However, these classes pre-date the current “no loan” policy. On personal issues—relationships, voting, satisfaction with life—Amherst ranked at various middle positions within the two cohorts. On the question of promotion of diversity—the extent to which respondents interacted in college with people in other demographic categories and currently interact—Amherst was in the middle

of the both cohorts of consortium schools on all counts. We will track the impact of increasing diversity on college and later-life experience, in light of the fact that, since the matriculation years of the respondents in 2005 and 2009, the portion of Amherst students of color has risen by almost one-half, the number of students on financial aid has increased by about a third, and the number of Pell recipients has nearly doubled.

In terms of immediate post-graduation activity, we survey students just before graduation, three months out, six months out, and one year out. Six-months-out surveys of recent graduates indicate the following:

Graduate Outcomes, 2007-2011 **Employment / Graduate School Status***

Status	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Employed full-time & part-time, no graduate school	70%	73%	72%	68%	67%
Graduate school full-time & part time	23%	20%	13%	20%	17%
Other (travel; personal plan)	7%	6%	5%	5%	8%
Currently seeking employment	1%	1%	9%	7%	8%

*Percentages are of respondents only, not the entire class. 2007: 297/409, 73% of class responded; 2008: 331/445, 74%; 2009: 297/419, 71%; 2010: 325/428, 76%; 2011: 327/483, 68%

Type of Employer*

Type	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
For Profit	54%	47%	51%	50%	66%
Not-for-Profit	46%	40%	33%	37%	27%
Government Agency	N/A	13%	16%	13%	7%

*2007: 188 respondents; 2008: 196 respondents; 2009: 180 respondents; 2010: 218 respondents; 2011: 210 respondents

Projections: As the clearinghouse data mature and more institutions participate, we shall have a fuller direct measure of post-graduate destinations. We will correlate these results with measures of performance in the undergraduate years. We will inform academic departments of the post-graduate outcomes of their majors in one of the next editions of the DAR. In keeping with our aspiration that our graduates should “link learning with leadership,” we will investigate postgraduate outcomes in respect to civic engagement, promotion of diversity, life-long learning, and other dimensions of attainment beyond the workplace.

C. Assessment of student learning (*The Academic Program, 4.48-4.54*)

Special Emphasis Four: Evaluating student learning beyond the class and department level as a cumulative general educational achievement.

Overview: We have much progress to report, especially in defining learning goals for general education and majors, and in the creation of assessment loops by academic departments. The challenges are large as well, such as in tracking the workings of the open curriculum and in aggregating evidence from the direct assessment done by departments.

Section C.1 below discusses general education, addressing *Special Emphasis Four*; **Section C.2** discusses education in department majors. Each section is arranged by (a) learning goals, (b) evidence, (c) appraisal, and (d) projections. Some topics are discussed elsewhere: **Chapter II**, *Special Emphasis Two*, discusses measures of our effectiveness in writing and quantitative instruction. **Chapter III**, *Planning and Evaluation*, discusses our initiatives in bringing empirical evidence into decision making.

C.1 General education

C.1.a Learning goals

The visiting committee in 2008 noted that the general education expectation “has been complicated by new concerns over writing and quantitative and informational skills and needs rethinking and reformulation by the CEP and the Faculty” (p. 9). In accordance with this recommendation and with *The Academic Program* 4.48, we have reformulated our core expectations. By an extensive review process in AY 2011-2012, the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) and Committee of Six developed an updated list of learning goals, which was then recast and approved after extensive discussion by the faculty in May of 2012. It appears on the college webpage as the top page of *Academics* (<https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/>) and in the college catalogue under “The Liberal Studies Curriculum” (2012-2013, p. 72):

As student and advisor together plan a student’s program, they should discuss whether the student has selected courses that:

- develop fundamental capabilities such as critical reading, written and oral expression, quantitative reasoning, and proficiency in using information resources;
- achieve breadth of understanding through study in a range of disciplines and modes of inquiry.

This compact summary of goals replaces an outmoded enumeration of areas of breadth from 1977 (revised in 1996) and adds fundamental capabilities that have received concerted attention in the past decade. The faculty also vigorously supported breadth in course taking, but with significant controversy about how specific and prescriptive to be in designating areas. The sense prevailed that breadth consists more in students’ engagement and integration across fields and in continuing commitment to learning than in exposure to a number of fields.

All academic departments also articulated and posted their learning goals for their majors, which in broad measure align with the goals for general education and for FYS, as will be discussed in more detail below in **Section C.2.a**:

GOAL	GENERAL EDUCATION 2012	FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR 2009	MAJORS (Number citing the goal) 2012
WRITTEN EXPRESSION	X	X	28
QUANTITATIVE REASONING	X		11
CRITICAL READING	X	X	23
ORAL EXPRESSION	X	X	15
INFORMATION RESOURCES	X		25
BREADTH OF STUDY	X	N.A.	N.A.

We recognize that this top-level formulation of general education goals is only the start of a conversation. We have launched processes to define these goals more precisely and establish what constitutes credible evidence for achieving them (see the description of pilot projects in **Section C.1.b** below).

Development of learning goals for the cocurriculum and other areas of student life is now underway. Such goals will be a focus of the strategic planning project of 2012-2014, and the College Council (comprising faculty, students, and deans) has already begun discussion. The Center for Community Engagement (CCE) will be promulgating learning goals within AY 2012-2013, and the department of athletics has begun discussion of the goals of their program.

C.1.b Evidence

Surveys and enrollment clearinghouse: We have a robust suite of surveys that provide evidence of student and alumni evaluation of their educational experience:

- Higher Education Research Institute Cooperative Institutional Research Project (HERI – CIRP)–most years since 1971;
- Consortium on Financing Higher Education (COFHE) Enrolled Student Survey–2003, 2005, 2007, 2011;
- COFHE Senior Survey–1998, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2010, 2012;
- COFHE Alumni Survey–2000, 2005, 2009, 2013.

As discussed in **Chapter II, Special Emphasis Three**, broad surveys of the FYS program were conducted in 2005 and 2012, which reflected the positive results of clearer learning goals and stronger support for writing pedagogy. In 2008 we administered the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and now subscribe to the National Student Clearinghouse for post-graduate enrollment and degrees.

As discussed in **Chapter III, *Planning and Evaluation***, we are making this evidence more accessible online for decision making by administrators, faculty, and trustees by means of theme-based (rather than survey-by-survey) reporting (e.g., “learning goals,” “admission”).

From 2002 onward, such evidence as organized by faculty committees (SCAE, CAP) and working groups had a large impact in mobilizing curricular, pedagogical, and personnel change in respect to writing, quantitative reasoning, and community-based learning (CBL). Improved reporting to academic departments is allowing them to map their own performance and demographics onto college-wide patterns in a way that should allow a cohesive response to achieving general education learning goals (see below **Section C.2.b**).

Transcript analysis: Course election provides a starting point in assessing breadth in disciplines and modes of inquiry. As we reported in 2008, in terms of divisional breadth, Amherst students distribute their courses elections well for the most part, and these distributions have remained stable over the last decade.

In the class of 2011, 97% of the class took two or more humanities courses; 93% took two or more classes in the social and behavior sciences. Of natural science and mathematics courses, 70% of the class took two or more, and another 16% took one. The 14% who took no mathematics or science course and the 6% who took no quantitative course continue to be a concern. We can now better track social science courses with significant Q-skills components through the “quantitative reasoning” keyword. These statistics have moved little over the last decade. As discussed above in **Section A**, we are mining transcript evidence to determine persistence in mathematics and science programs and distribution across majors by sub-groups.

Class of 2011 Courses Attempted by Division

Division	Number of Courses Attempted in Division					Total
	0	1	2	3	4 or More	
Humanities	1%	2%	5%	6%	86%	100%
Science & Math	14%	16%	13%	10%	47%	100%
Soc. & Behavior	2%	5%	3%	5%	86%	100%
Interdisciplinary	1%	27%	29%	18%	25%	100%

“Interdisciplinary” includes the FYS program and the non-departmental “colloquia.” (For the related but different statistics on enrollment in courses involving quantitative reasoning, which include economics and some psychology courses, see the table in **Chapter II, *Special Emphasis Two***.)

The Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA): The CLA has been publicized as a state-of-the-art instrument in assessing critical thinking and writing skills. On a trial basis, we administered it to incoming first-year students in the fall of 2009 and to the graduating seniors in the spring of 2010. In overall scores, both groups placed in the top 1% of students from all participating institutions, as would be expected on the basis of other comparative evidence, such as admission credentials and COFHE surveys. The mean SAT scores for Amherst students are 400 points higher than for all participating institutions. Amherst seniors achieved higher scores than did the first-year students, but the strong first-year results made changes over time difficult to

evaluate. Peer institutions have raised cautions about how well the CLA measures the value added in critical thinking and writing skills within the top 1–2% or tracks the acquisition of specialized knowledge in major fields of study. Moreover, first-year students are easy to recruit and take the project seriously (200 invitations yielded 113 test takers), while seniors are busy finishing honors work and applying for jobs, and are more jaded about testing (450 invitations yielded 100 takers). For a longitudinal measure, we will retest the 113 first-year participants of 2009 as seniors in 2013 and have tested 100 students from the class of 2016 for future tracking.

Student-research assessment project: With the leadership of the library and in collaboration with Swarthmore and several other liberal arts colleges, we are discussing how to investigate and assess the ways that students do research. A pilot online information-literacy test of first-year students was administered to a sample of 120 students in the fall of 2011 and included questions on searching and discovery, Boolean logic, the elements of a bibliographical citation, peer review, and evaluation. In navigating library basics and database interfaces, students showed strong enough proficiency to persuade us that refinements of across-the-board testing would not usefully guide improvements in instruction or have much credibility with the faculty. More advanced skills are now the focus. The library, in collaboration with dean's office, is investigating how students in their four years, including independent research, become resourceful, critical, and confident users of the whole spectrum of information sources. Working with peer institutions, we are seeking foundation support to investigate two questions:

- First, what specific learning outcomes best define successful undergraduate research, and how might one assess these outcomes? The aim is to develop instruments for direct assessment to follow cohorts across their four-year undergraduate careers.
- Second, what can and should we know about *how* undergraduates conduct research and create final products? Through a series of periodic interviews, questionnaires, and other ethnographic methods, the study will explore how students develop over four years and how formalized instruction affects that development.

Instruction librarians at Amherst are already working with academic departments to understand their field-specific standards for effective student research and have been embedded in research seminars required for majors in several departments. We have launched a series of workshops to explore how faculty in various departments introduce students to conducting research and how they assess progress in this area.² In preparation for the collaborative project, Amherst will host a conference in March, 2013, for four other colleges in the Alliance for Advancement of Liberal Arts Colleges (AALAC). A foundation has invited Amherst to submit an application after this conference to explore a longitudinal study that will examine the above questions.

² The Synergies Summit on student research:

<https://www.amherst.edu/media/view/399832/original/SynergiesSummitMay16.pdf>

Portfolio pilot projects: In tandem with the faculty's comprehensive review of academic advising pursuant to the 2012 ad hoc committee report (see **Chapter II, Special Emphasis Five**) and that report's focus on students' articulation of- and self-evaluation concerning- learning goals, we are piloting a portfolio system to assess a range of fundamental capabilities, with a component of self-reflection. In designing and piloting an elective portfolio system, we aim to draw on student responsibility and self-determination in a way that will be credible and sustainable within our academic culture. A task force has been organized, including the director of IR, associate dean of the faculty, the CEP's administrator/researcher, and a faculty member and a student member of the CEP. This task force will in AY 2012-2013 invite selected students and faculty to participate in the design and pilot testing of a modified portfolio that demonstrates not just writing skills but also exposure to- and achievement of- our other learning goals for fundamental capabilities and breadth of understanding. Several examples of portfolios used at other colleges will be presented to them, along with the essays required of students at institutions such as Brown University and Carleton College to demonstrate improvement in writing. The task force will create and test ways for students to demonstrate competence in written and oral expression, quantitative reasoning, critical reading, and proficiency in using information resources, as well as breadth of understanding through study in a range of disciplines and modes of inquiry. This task force will report results to the CEP in fall of 2013, with an eye to creating a portfolio program for a larger cohort, perhaps of fifty students.

The FYS Committee has launched a parallel project with a task force of FYS instructors, who are exploring how to assess students' achievement of the program's learning goals over the course of the semester. They plan to report to the annual FYS retreat in May, 2013.

C.1.c Appraisal

We can report progress: We have broad indirect evidence from surveys and post-graduation outcomes, with some direct confirmation from the CLA, that Amherst is keeping pace with the front rank of liberal arts institutions in respect to student learning. In the last five years we have significantly enhanced our capacity to assess learning by increased staffing and professional development within the IR office, library, and writing center. The impetus for these increases was in significant degree the interest and concern of faculty in departments, committees, and interest groups. All assessment initiatives have proceeded in close collaboration with the faculty, as for example in annual reporting through the DAR to all departments about student outcomes, attitudes, and demographics (see below in **Section C.2.b**). There is continuing momentum from the faculty initiatives from 2002 onward that resulted in program reform and growth for writing, Q-skills, CBL, and FYS, as well as from the continuing monitoring of admission policy and student outcomes by FCAFA. An institutional strength is that the "intensive," "attentive," and other courses created to address students' learning needs continue to be staffed and supported by regular faculty and that new faculty appointments are designed to reinforce this support.

We have much to do: Though responsive and adaptable, our academic culture—at once decentralized and densely interconnected—is hard to map. As in peer institutions, system-wide assessment at Amherst lacks the directness and rigor of that done by departments. All graduating students are accounted for in the rich direct evidence that departments gather and evaluate, and doubly so for the 35-40% of students with two majors. We need stronger reporting structures to bring such evidence to bear on overall student achievement, with reinforcement from enhanced across-the-curriculum direct assessment. Centralized assessment, a tall order for any institution, is yet more difficult in a college where top-down mandates are seen as inimical to creativity.

C.1.d Projections

Standard assessment measures and reporting: We will continue and refine current testing and survey projects, such as the retesting of the students in the class of 2013 who took the CLA in 2009 and initial testing of a cohort from the class of 2016, as well as a full-scale alumni survey in 2013. Advancing our life-cycle assessment strategy, we will deepen the analysis of postgraduate enrollment and degrees from the National Student Clearinghouse to track long-term outcomes for various student sub-groups. The DAR will be enhanced annually by the cycle of senior and enrolled student surveys so that individual departments can have richer feedback from their students, as well as current information about the constituencies that they are teaching, and postgraduate outcomes for their majors.

Pilot projects in direct assessment: We will advance innovative the multi-college inquiry on the acquisition of research skills. The development of elective portfolio formats for general education and the FYS program will entail a protracted and broadly consultative period of development, with large institutional investment, and adoption will depend on its ability to yield credible and actionable results. Preliminary reports are expected from the FYS Committee in May of 2013 and from the dean's office and IR office for the broader general education project in September of 2013.

Co-curriculum: We will build capacity in assessing the outcomes of co-curricular activity by beginning from highly organized entities such as the CCE and department of athletics. By May of 2013, the CCE will finalize its model of student outcomes (cited in italics below), which are correlated with the outcomes in the college mission statement. The CCE will assess the extent to which students are developing *critical reflection* skills through participation in public service internships. They will develop a rubric to assess students' post-internship essays and will compare them to their funding application essays. They will also develop pre/post measures of *civic passion* and students' *understanding the range of opportunities to make a difference* that could be appended to student surveys listed above in **Section C.1.b**. Ideally, items can be appended to the survey of incoming students (pre-test) and a survey at the end of students' sophomore year. The matched pre/post data would be matched with existing participation data to compare changes in students who are high, moderate, or marginal levels of community engagement activities. The CCE will also pursue further collaboration with faculty members who teach CBL

courses in an effort to develop problem-based learning assessments that would tap into student learning in the areas of *analyzing and solving public problems*.

Administrative structures: By May of 2013, a system-wide progress report will be prepared by the dean's office and the IR office for the strategic planning committee as it considers the resources and administrative structures needed for effective learning assessment. Pending the findings of that committee, it is anticipated that the CEP, the IR office, and the dean's or provost's office will collaborate to develop some continuing body (i.e., assessment committee or student learning committee) to monitor, first, the progress of assessment plans on the level of general education, the majors, and the co-curriculum; and, second, the communication and use of assessment results for planning, budgeting, and the improvement of instructional programs.

C.2 Education in department majors

C.2.a Learning goals

Departments have traditionally explained their purposes and methods in the catalog, on websites, in information sessions and in advising for students, but rarely in terms of formalized learning goals. In AY 2010-2011 departments renumbered their courses by levels of needed preparation (100s, 200s, 300s, 400s), as required for online registration, and generally clarified departmental expectations accordingly. At the request of the CEP, in AY 2011-2012 academic departments articulated and posted the learning goals for their majors,³ reported on their methods of assessing student learning, and described changes made in response to that evidence (**Table E1, Part A**). The level of explicitness and detail in articulating learning goals is generally high, as one might expect, given the elaborateness of departmental websites and the 550 pages that it takes in the course catalogue to describe courses for 1,800 students.⁴

C.2.b Evidence

In most departments, progress toward structure and transparency in creating assessment loops has been sustained and sometimes rapid. In their reports of AY 2011-2012 to the CEP, 20 of the college's 34 departments and programs described recent revisions to their major: Eight had added capstone requirements (research seminars, "writing-attentive" seminars in the sciences, seminars with oral components, etc.), and seventeen strengthened or increased other courses required for the major, such as by adding methods and interpretation courses, lab-intensives, or programs with research librarians. The four programs that have been launched since 2008 naturally do not yet have changes to report but are already rigorous in terms of assessment (e.g., a five-year cycle for review of student learning in biochemistry/biophysics).

Even in the one-third or so of departments that have not recently modified their major requirements or assessment plans, curricular evolution has generally been steady – witness the

³https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/dean_faculty/general_information/nesacaccreditation2012/goalsformajors

⁴ Academic department websites: <https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/departments>.

ca. 200 new courses from across the curriculum that are reviewed annually by the CEP and voted by the faculty. The level of communication across departments is high (ca. 40% of faculty members are appointed in two departments). Across the curriculum, departments have been evolving in common directions, notably in providing and requiring more research experiences for non-honors students and creating better defined capstone experiences for all majors.

All departments require a comprehensive exercise, usually an exam or capstone project. Normally all faculty members in a department review each cohort of graduating majors, and often all members evaluate all honors work or participate in all oral exams or presentations. About half of students complete honors projects and are intensively assessed at that point. Honors projects judged worthy of graduation *summa cum laude* are evaluated by the Committee of Six. Departments monitor graduate admission and success.

The department activity report (DAR): Academic departments have been increasingly interested in understanding the demographics and entry qualifications of their majors and course-takers. After years of answering inquiries, in 2011 the IR office developed and launched the first yearly DAR, based on departments' data requests as they prepared external reviews or petitioned for an additional teaching position. The report was piloted with a subset of departments and will be annually updated and expanded in light of further requests for information. Each department thereby receives summaries and trend reports of the demographics, athletic status, legacy status, entry qualifications (reader ratings, SATs) of majors and course-takers, as well as the percentage of majors graduating with honors and the department's grading practices in light of divisional and college norms. The DAR also provides departments with a summary of the most recent and relevant survey results. For example, in 2011 the DAR provided departments with the results for their majors on the survey questions in the following areas, with comparison divisional and college-wide results: overall educational experience; academic advising; accessibility of instructors and advisors; quality of interactions outside of class; research with faculty (experience and plans); and ability to conduct research. The results are displayed in the following format:

How would you evaluate your entire educational experience?

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Total Count
Department	0%	10%	39%	52%	31
Natural Science	1%	3%	34%	63%	208
College-Wide	0%	4%	35%	60%	826

Below we survey majors in two groups: First, we first address the largest majors, some of which have been under particular pressure to accommodate growing numbers of students. Second, we group by discipline majors with graduating cohorts of around twenty students or fewer, in which most student majors are known to most faculty members. (Biology and

environmental studies are mid-way between the two groups.) Reference to **Table E1, Part A** will be assumed throughout this sub-section.

Larger majors:

The five largest departments, which enroll nearly 60% of the graduating class, face the challenge of maintaining standards of instruction and assessment for larger cohorts than can be easily known to all faculty members. Three of them responded to perceived deficiencies in student learning by increasing requirements at the level of the advanced seminar or capstone project:

- Economics has since 2007 required all non-honors majors to score in the 60th percentile or above in the ETS Major Field Test in Economics. Retesting is allowed, but majors cannot be graduated without that score. As a guide to weaker students, there is a minimum grade requirement in introductory courses before students may enroll in core courses or elect the major. Core courses are taught in regular and optional advanced versions. In response to an external review, the advanced seminar (400s level) requirement was increased from one seminar to two.
- History replaced an ineffective comprehensive exam with a requirement that all non-honors majors complete a research paper of 20 - 25 pages that conforms to stipulated guidelines.⁵ Writers present their work to the department and to the other majors.
- Psychology uses embedded assessment in various required distributional areas and in the advanced seminars. Having determined from honors theses and research essays that seniors' writing skills were often deficient, the department required a second advanced seminar of all majors, capped introductory and intermediate courses at forty students, while seminars are capped at fifteen. Deficiencies in preparing for independent research led to a requirement for a separate methods lab in the required statistics course.

The other two departments addressed the need for greater breadth (English) or depth (political science) in mid-course:

- English devised a comprehensive exam, keyed to the major learning goals, written over three days.⁶ In reviewing exam results and transcripts, the department discovered a correlation between learning outcomes and the number of 200s courses that students had taken. In 2010 they raised the requirement of 200s courses from one to three and instituted a requirement for a pre-1800 course.
- Political science requires, for breadth, courses in at least four of five designated areas in the department and, for depth, a self-designed core concentration of at least four courses; both requirements are currently under review. To address deficiencies in

⁵ History department guidelines for research papers:

<https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/departments/history/major/guidelines>

⁶ Guide to the English major comprehensive exam:

https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/departments/english/major/current_majors/comps

preparation for research, the department this year raised the qualifying GPA for honors work from B+ to A-.

We turn now to majors enrolling fewer students:

Natural sciences, mathematics, and computer science:

These majors, enrolling a fifth of the graduating class, all have a required comprehensive exam, in most cases oral. Four of them require senior majors to attend seminars at which faculty, students, and outside speakers present research (biology, biochemistry/biophysics, chemistry, neuroscience). These departments have recently increased seminar requirements (biology, geology, computer science), the comprehensive requirement (neuroscience), or both (chemistry). Geology increased their seminar requirement to address deficiencies in writing in honors theses. In various ways, these majors approach the goal that all senior majors should have worked with all department members at some point and that honors candidates (ca. 60% of majors) should present their research to the entire department and other majors.

Modern languages:

These majors enroll about a tenth of the graduating class, most of them double majors. Language proficiency can reliably be tested. All departments require oral and written exams or, in the case of Japanese, Chinese, and Arabic, embedded assessment in the advanced seminar. As a control on local standards, these departments monitor language placements and outcomes in foreign study programs.

Performing and studio arts:

Theater and dance, art and the history of art (studio concentration), and music (performance concentration) all require of all majors public exhibitions or performances. Faculty supervision and critiquing of creative work is necessarily intensive. The theater and dance department meets with every major in every semester for portfolio review and project planning.

“Studies” majors:

This group includes both departments (with faculty lines) and programs (without lines); with two exceptions, faculty members have a half- or three-quarter- time appointment in another department. Programs typically include core courses for the major, along with a broad range of courses cross-listed with other departments. To provide cohesion, four “studies” majors require an honors thesis (American, architectural, European, and film and media). Black studies’ highly structured sequence of three introductory courses builds analytical and expressive capabilities and leads to a research-based capstone course. Environmental studies has a capstone course involving independent research. Women’s and gender studies now requires a research seminar.

Other humanities and social sciences:

The remaining majors fall into various groups, including humanities majors with highly structured programs that lead to advanced seminars (classics [three concentrations] and philosophy). Law, jurisprudence, and social thought requires both an analytical and a research seminar in the junior year and a senior research project. Anthropology/sociology (three concentrations) requires a grade of B in the required theory course (ANTH 323 or SOCI 315) or an assigned essay on theory. Art and the history of art has two non-studio concentrations, both of which have an oral comprehensive exam.

C.2.c Appraisal

Academic departments have in the main made significant progress in promulgating learning goals, structuring requirements to support these goals, and strengthening assessment, especially through capstone courses. Various factors, including the 2002-2007 planning process, the shift to a four-tier course numbering system, and the current hiring boom, have fostered increased intentionality on the part of departments and more attention to local and national best practices. Departments experiencing enrollment pressures or bimodal student preparation are particularly active users of institutional data, and all departments make active use of their assessments of graduating cohorts. Two gaps in our system are being addressed: First, departments have not reported the results of their assessment plans. Second, the decennial external reviews have paid too little attention to learning assessment, despite guidelines that articulate that expectation, and follow-up reporting a year after the review has been only sporadic.

C.2.d Projections

We will continue to refine the DAR, with the addition of postgraduate outcomes. In AY 2012-2013 academic departments will be asked to submit to the administration outlines of how they will develop full assessment plans in the next years. This information will give us an overview of assessment on the department level and how that assessment bears on our general education learning goals. Departments' views of credible and actionable evidence and sustainable assessment plans will inform the design and implementation of assessment plans for general education. As discussed in **Section C.1.d**, the strategic planning steering committee will advise on the creation of an institutional structure to oversee learning assessment on an ongoing basis.

Chapter V: Plans

In the last decade Amherst has completed planning initiatives and implemented their recommendations in a number of areas.¹ On the basis of our self-study over the last year, we can determine institutional imperatives on a short-term (two-year) and longer-term (five-year) basis. In singling out these areas, we are mindful of the overriding need for strategic planning that can update, integrate, and work beyond the findings and visions of these separate projects and do so with a longer time frame (ca. twenty years). The agenda of that campus-wide strategic initiative must remain open, and we cannot anticipate its findings. We can, however, designate currently known priorities about which we should take stock on a two- or five-year basis. Evaluation and action are, in fact, already under way in all of the areas below.

Within two years:

- Organize and staff the provost's office for Provost Peter Uvin, and complete the senior hires and the reorganization of their offices for the chief financial and administrative officer and the dean of students. (**Chapter III, *Organization and Governance***)
- Complete the inquiries of the Sexual Misconduct Oversight Committee and implementation of its recommendations. (**Chapter III, *Students***)
- Complete the pilot projects on learning assessment and create a mechanism for aggregating assessment by academic departments. (**Chapter IV, Section C**)

Within five years:

- Review and reconceptualize student life programs: As a residential college, we must integrate our ongoing academic, financial, and facilities planning with comparable capacities in respect to student life programs, including issues of administrative organization, adequate staffing and facilities, integrated and proactive programming, legal compliance, learning goals, and assessment. (**Chapter III, *Students***)
- Make measurable improvements in the support and assessment of student learning: To serve students from a wide range of backgrounds equitably and well, we need to bolster our initiatives to support student learning on multiple fronts: through accessible courses, academic support services, faculty advising, and assessment. (**Chapter II, *Special Emphases Two and Five*; Chapter III, *Academic Life*; Chapter IV, Section C**)
- Increase faculty diversity at a level that meets or exceeds the pace of peer institutions: Expansion and rapid generational turnover – as much as a third of the faculty within eight years (2000-2008) – present a historic and not-to-be-missed opportunity to build a faculty that reflects and nurtures the diversity of our student body. (**Chapter III, *Faculty***)

¹Planning initiatives have addressed: the curriculum, academic support, admission, finances, and facilities. There have also been intensive reviews of academic advising, the First-Year Seminar program, student mental health, the counseling center, and academic support services.

Strategic planning:

In September, 2012, President Martin in consultation with the faculty executive committee (Committee of Six) initiated a strategic planning project, which will issue a final report to be approved by the trustees in early 2014. In consultation with standing college committees and the board of trustees, multiple bodies will work concurrently to articulate the college's priorities and strategies for meeting our goals over the next two decades in light of the external pressures on higher education. A strategic planning steering committee (SPSC) with representation from the trustees, faculty, students, staff, and alumni, will oversee working groups that will formulate our needs and aspirations, and recommend continuing mechanisms for planning and evaluation in four domains of campus life:

- A financial outlook working group to analyze potential financial models and assess the implications of various financial assumptions and/or choices;
- A facilities working group to consult with architects and planners to create a campus assessment plan as a framework for the projects that emerge from the strategic plan and subsequent initiatives;
- A curriculum and pedagogy working group to address instruction, advising, academic support, and assessment, including the uses of online education to supplement and enhance traditional face-to-face instruction;
- A student-life working group to define goals, strengthen and integrate systems, rationalize administration, and devise assessment measures for the various parts of residential life and cocurricular activities.

In light of the five-year institutional goals listed above and the related needs that will inevitably emerge in the planning process, the curriculum and student life working groups will have particularly broad responsibilities. All four of these groups will consult broadly with the college community. The provisional schedule is for a subgroup of the SPSC to produce over the summer of 2013 a draft of the strategic plan. The board of trustees will hold a retreat in June of 2013 to contribute to this planning process and to discuss the Commission's recommendations on the basis of the current interim review. In the fall of 2013, faculty, students, staff, and alumni will be asked to respond to the draft plan. On the basis of the resulting commentary and debate, a subgroup of the SPSC and the president will in December of 2013 generate a final draft of the strategic plan to be shared with the community. Depending on how closely the schedule can be followed, the plan will be brought to the trustees for approval in January or April of 2014.