

Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, and Students

of

CONNECTICUT COLLEGE
New London, Connecticut

by

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

Prepared after study of the institution's
self-evaluation report and a visit
to the campus April 8-11, 2018

The members of the team:

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

COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION
New England Association of Schools and College
Preface Page to the Team Report

Date form completed: April 11, 2018

Name of Institution: Connecticut College

1. **History:** Year chartered or authorized: 1911 Year first degrees awarded: 1915

2. **Type of control:** State City Religious Group; specify: _____
 Private, not-for-profit Other; specify: _____
 Proprietary

3. **Degree level:**
 Associate Baccalaureate Masters (*program is suspended*) Professional Doctorate

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

	Full-time	Part-time	FTE	Retention ^a	Graduation ^b	# Degrees ^c
Associate						
Baccalaureate	1,764	2	1,765	91%	85%	442
Graduate						

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

5. **Student debt:**

	Most Recent Year	One Year Prior	Two Years Prior
Three-year Cohort Default Rate	3.2%	1.1%	2.0%
Three-year Loan Repayment Rate	89.7%	89.8%	

	Associate	Baccalaureate	Graduate
Average % of graduates leaving with debt		41%	
Average amount of debt for graduates		\$23,550	

6. **Number of current faculty:** Full-time: 182 Part-time: 66 FTE: 204.0

7. **Current fund data for most recently completed fiscal year:** (FY 2017; values shown in millions)

Revenues		Expenditures	
Tuition	\$93,952	Instruction	\$39,022
Gov't Appropriations		Research	\$1,875
Gifts/Grants/Endowment	\$25,505	General	
Auxiliary Enterprises	\$22,817	Auxiliary Enterprises	\$18,137
Other (Less financial aid)	(\$34,852)	Other	\$57,122
Total	\$107,422	Total	\$116,156

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

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

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

Introduction

The NEASC evaluation team was impressed by the Connecticut College Reaccreditation Steering Committee, the community members, and the College's careful and thoughtful report. The Connecticut College interim report was submitted six years ago; its decennial review was deferred by one year so that the College could complete its strategic planning process. During all stages of the review process, the team encountered engaged members of the Connecticut College community—students, faculty, staff, and trustees alike. It was a pleasure for all of us to serve on the team and to explore Connecticut College's beautiful campus.

In the past six years since the interim report, the College has completed a number of notable projects: a \$211 million fundraising campaign; a new innovative curriculum called *Connections*, which builds on strengths in interdisciplinary scholarship, global education, and career preparation; and a number of building projects, especially the award-winning library renovation. Importantly, the College welcomed a new president, Katherine Bergeron, in January 2014. She has assembled a strong senior administrative team, and together they are advancing the College in important ways, as they respect a philosophy that has grounded the College from the beginning: “steeped in equity and committed to the intellectual, professional, and civic engagement of every student.”

Connecticut College has a distinctive brand among liberal arts Colleges, specifically putting “the liberal arts into action.” As such, it attracts students, faculty, and staff who care about the impact of their work in a world that is more interconnected than ever before. This core value has resulted in important academic and co-curricular programming for students throughout Connecticut College's 107-year history; for example, students have benefited from a robust internship program, interdisciplinary study, a world language requirement, and service to the local community and throughout the world.

The team followed the NEASC guidelines in constructing the schedule and met with faculty, staff, students, and trustees who could speak to each standard. For example, with respect to Standard 4 on the Academic Program, members of the team met separately with many groups throughout the College: the Dean's Working Group, the Center Directors, the Pathways Coordinators, faculty involved with the *Connections* curriculum, faculty and staff involved with Global Engagement programming, and faculty involved with the master's of psychology program. In addition, the team requested an additional meeting with the dean of the faculty to discuss Standard 4. The team's process was similar for other standards. The team also had open meetings with students, faculty, and staff. The team chair, Kathleen McCartney, met at least daily with President Bergeron to ensure that the team could address questions directly to the president while on campus.

1. Mission and Purposes

Connecticut College's mission was approved by its governing board in 2004: “Connecticut College educates students to put the liberal arts into action as citizens in a global society.” No changes were made to the mission during the 2015-2016 strategic planning process. Its mission and supporting values are clearly stated and appear in key College publications and speeches. First-year seminar instructors discuss the mission with new students during their first few weeks at the College. The mission and values reflect the College's long tradition of preparing students to become responsible, engaged citizens who will create meaningful change in the world.

The honor code is a point of pride for all members of the community. It was established in 1922 and is based on “trust and mutual respect.” One student noted that it provided the “foundation for the student experience at Connecticut College because it reflects an important core value.”

Professors commented that the honor code allows them to teach differently; for example, they do not need to allocate class time to administer exams, but instead can trust students to take exams on their own, reserving class time for teaching. Students from each class sign the honor code, and four sets of signatures, one per class year, are framed and displayed in the College Center at Crozier-Williams, which sends a powerful message to the community about its values.

It is apparent that the College's mission and values guide decision-making at all levels. The College's mission and values were a guiding force for the 2015-2016 strategic planning process, and are clearly embodied in the plan, *Building on Strength: A New Plan for Connecticut College*. As President Bergeron notes in her introduction to the plan, it is important to begin any strategic planning process with a reflection on mission and values, in this case, the principles of innovation, equity, and excellence in education. The plan outlines goals pertaining to the academic experience; to the student experience; and to supporting a diverse, just, and sustainable community.

Members of the Connecticut College community voiced support for the strategic plan, especially the new *Connections* curriculum, throughout the visit. President Bergeron noted that the strategic plan provided "shared language" for the work they do and for their aspirations going forward. Students participated fully in the strategic planning process. One member of the community noted that the Connecticut College community had a "great habit of listening to students," and it was clear from our meetings with students that they feel empowered through a culture that supports their participation in shared governance. Students participate in many administrative committees and every department has a student advisory board that meets with departmental faculty members a minimum of twice per year.

It is worth noting that students, staff, and faculty take a great deal of pride in their community. They love their campus, sited on a hill overlooking Long Island Sound. They believe their campus climate is strong, with students at the heart of everything they do. And they are remarkably informed about the economic challenges that Connecticut College, like many liberal arts colleges, faces; we heard again and again that they had found a way "to do more with less." Members of the team were struck by how happy most people seem to be.

2. Planning and Evaluation

Planning: Since its last NEASC review, Connecticut College has devoted significant energy to the development and implementation of its strategic plan, *Building on Strength: A New Plan for Connecticut College*. Developed with input from the entire College community and adopted by the Board of Trustees in 2016, this strategic plan established a comprehensive, long-term vision for the College. The plan articulates three interconnected priorities focused on the College's academic life, student experience, and the promotion of a more just and sustainable community. The planning process was inclusive and communicated thoroughly and broadly to the College community and the public. The strategic plan envisions the College becoming a leader in integrative education and the new *Connections* curriculum is reflective of that vision.

Connections is closely aligned with the College's mission of "putting liberal arts into action" and is consistent with the ideal of educating the whole person. Faculty, staff, and students appear to be engaged and enthusiastic about *Connections*. It is a bold step for the institution (and liberal arts education broadly), and there are some risks associated with the plan that will need to be monitored. Maintaining the community's current enthusiasm and momentum will be important as the College continues to implement the curriculum and engage in a process of program

evaluation and improvement. The impact of *Connections* has been considered in the College's academic and financial planning. Regarding enrollment planning, the College hopes that the new curriculum will generate interest in prospective students and create some positive momentum in the growth of its application numbers.

A significant issue that has impacted the planning activities of the College is a recent decline in enrollment. Since the College's interim report in 2012, enrollment has declined steadily from an all-time high of 1,898 FTE undergraduates to 1,783. At the time of the team's visit, enrollment was at a level that the College had not seen since 2003, while the College had expanded the size of its faculty and staff over that period, with 49 additional FTE staff (+10%) and 27 FTE faculty (+16%). This reduced the College's student-faculty ratio from 10.7 to 8.7. While this may have benefits for the academic experience of students, the College is aware that it is not sustainable given its current resources. The most recent incoming class, the class of 2022, is projected to come in at well over 500 students. This reverses the decline somewhat, bringing overall enrollment at the College to around 1,815.

In response, the College has embarked upon a review of the "optimal size of the College." This effort has already factored into the College's financial and academic planning as it attempts to align the size of the faculty and staff with the projected size of the student body to reach future financial stability. For example, a restructuring of health benefits, a Voluntary Retirement Offer, and a Strategic Position Review Committee have been useful steps in determining optimal staffing levels and correcting the imbalance between the College's financial and human resources and the size of the student body. This "optimal size of the College" review and the recommendations that it generates will be critical to the future success of the College. It will be important for the College to employ planning processes that are comprehensive, inclusive, and appropriately transparent.

Looking forward, the College recognizes the need for updates to its physical plant and is finalizing a new campus master plan. The development of the master plan has been guided by the goals articulated in the College's strategic plan, *Building on Strength*. With this in mind, the master plan has been designed to prioritize sustainability, enhance the College's academic distinction, and enrich the student experience. Financial planning has been integrated into this process and the College plans to support its capital improvements through a comprehensive campaign.

The College's financial planning is guided by an established set of financial management policies and procedures, uses a variety of long-term models, incorporates input from multiple internal and external stakeholders, and is highly sensitive to external environmental challenges. Information about financial planning, as well as information about technology planning, is presented in greater detail later in this report, in Standard 7.

Academic planning is comprehensive, long-term, and responsive to shifting enrollment, curricular, and staffing demands. It is commendable that this responsibility is shared among the dean of the faculty, the Educational Planning Committee, the Faculty Steering and Conference Committee, and the departments and programs.

Evaluation: Connecticut College engages in a broad range of evaluation activities, employing both quantitative and qualitative analyses, and has used evaluation results to inform its planning efforts. Notably, the development of the *Connections* curriculum was guided by evidence gathered through the evaluation of the student experience and the assessment of student outcomes. Though evaluation substantively contributed to the development of the new curriculum, the team wanted to see more evidence that evaluation is serving a role in its continued development post-implementation. The self-study acknowledges that “even the best plans may require mid-course adjustments.” As the institution advances its work on *Connections*, it will be important for the College to continue to engage in a systematic and comprehensive evaluation of the curriculum that includes assessing student learning to inform future planning, especially with respect to faculty workload and student outcomes.

The College’s evaluation work is conducted by a variety of offices on campus, including the Office of Institutional Research and Planning (IRP) and employees across campus who are designated Banner “functional leads”. The IRP Office produces an array of analyses that guide decision-making in a variety of areas, including enrollment planning, faculty workload, residential life planning, and alumni outcomes. As the College has made efforts to expand its assessment activities and to use a more systematic approach, the IRP Office has taken on much of this work. Based on interactions during the team’s time on campus, it is clear that the office is valued and that demand for the office’s analytical work is high. In order to ensure that the IRP Office can continue to meet the needs of the College, it may be worthwhile to evaluate whether it has sufficient resources to meet the increased demand and to clarify roles and responsibilities, particularly as they relate to academic assessment.

In addition to its internal evaluation activities, the College has benefited from engaging external perspectives for its evaluation needs, when appropriate. In recent years, the College has worked with consultants to better understand and improve facilities and maintenance, admissions and financial aid, and dining services. Benchmarking through the use of national and peer datasets has informed planning activities in such areas as information services and faculty compensation.

Institutional guidelines indicate that reviews of academic programs are to occur approximately every ten years. However, according to the E-Series forms in the self-study, reviews of departments and programs have occurred at less frequent intervals. Reviews of academic programs have been regularized so that they are consistent with institutional guidelines.

3. Organization and Governance

Shared governance has been widely embraced as an ethos at Connecticut College, affording its community members many opportunities to work collaboratively to undertake new initiatives and to solve complex problems. A commitment to shared governance is clearly manifested in administrative structures and processes at all levels of the College, from the willingness of the trustees to restructure and reorient their standing committees to meet the demands of ongoing College initiatives, to the new structure within the Dean of the College’s office, to the way the Student Government Association (SGA) approaches its work with administrators, staff, and students.

Governing Board: Connecticut College has an engaged and deeply committed Board of Trustees, consisting of 30 members, 50% of whom are women, and 25% of whom are people of color. The Board has an appropriate role in assuring the institution's quality and integrity, and an effective structure, conducting its work through eleven standing committees. Its members have the professional experience and competence needed to fulfill their responsibilities as fiduciaries. They are intimately familiar with the mission, opportunities, and challenges facing the institution, and are enthusiastic in their support for the strategic plan, new curriculum, and other key initiatives.

The Board members commit significant time and personal financial resources to assure the continued success of the College and they have productive working relationships with the president and the senior administration. The Board provides new trustee training and orientation, and regularly evaluates its work-plan and structure by sending out surveys to all trustees to solicit feedback on these areas. The Board has been vigilant in restructuring committees to assure efficiency and focus; for example, the members recently decided to split enrollment strategy from the student experience and put enrollment under the finance committee. Faculty, staff, and students meet with trustees at each board meeting and at other times during the year. As a result of a new approach adopted in the fall of 2017, the Trustee-Student Liaison Committee now includes an array of students broader than just SGA members, enhancing Board engagement with students.

Internal Governance: Faculty, staff, and students have a voice in critical decisions, and there are many opportunities for participation by these groups in governance across the College. Faculty leaders assume certain institutional responsibilities and serve on major College committees. Importantly, the Faculty Steering and Conference Committee (FSCC) has a collaborative relationship with the senior administration; the faculty chairs of the FSCC and of the Priorities, Planning, and Budget Committee join the president's standing meetings with the senior administration each week. The president and senior administration are highly accessible to faculty, staff, and students, and are responsive to their needs and concerns.

There is robust student leadership in the Student Government Association (SGA) and the Honor Council. The student representatives with whom the team met are deeply invested in the work of these groups and undertake their roles with seriousness of purpose. They were knowledgeable about College structures and offices and spoke easily about collaborations with staff, faculty, and the administration. Student leaders are seen as trusted liaisons between the student body and the administration. They feel empowered and supported by the administration, and they recognize their ability to effect positive change.

The Board delegates to the president the requisite authority and autonomy to manage the institution to assure it is fulfilling its mission and purposes. The president provides a set of performance goals to the Board each year, and, in turn, the Board conducts a performance review of the president at the end of each year based on progress toward those goals. The dean of the faculty reports directly to the president and is responsible for assuring quality and integrity in the academic program, working in concert with faculty committees. Faculty working groups developed the new *Connections* curriculum over several years, carefully situating the program's

components within existing faculty-led committees, and, in some cases, creating new committees to assure proper oversight of the new curriculum. With the support of the dean of the College office, faculty have primary responsibility for the content, quality, and effectiveness of *Connections*.

The faculty recently voted to pilot a plan to add a second faculty meeting to each month. One meeting will include faculty only so that they may discuss and vote on legislative matters. Members of the FSCC will brief the president on faculty deliberations and decisions after the meeting. The second meeting will include the president, administrators, and staff and will focus on College business of a broader nature. The FSCC plans to evaluate whether this meeting schedule will help them achieve their goals more effectively. Certainly, an evaluation of strengths and weaknesses of this experiment will determine if the arrangement “provides for the appropriate participation of [College] constituencies, promotes communications, and effectively advances the quality of the institution.” *See Standard 3.13.*

4. *The Academic Program*

Introduction: Connecticut College currently offers the bachelor of arts degree, achieved through a combination of required general education courses and experiences, a major course of study, optional minors and certifications, and an array of co-curricular programming. (A single master’s program is suspended for the moment; more detail is provided about this program below.)

Based on the evaluation team’s review of Connecticut College’s self-study, materials provided to the team prior to and during the visit, information available publicly on the College’s website, and its conversations with faculty, students, staff, and the administration, the team has concluded that the academic program is appropriate for the Bachelor of Arts degree, well matched with the College’s liberal arts mission, and consistent with the CIHE-NEASC standards and the traditions of highly selective liberal arts Colleges.

Assessing Academic Quality: There are a variety of mechanisms and structures in place to evaluate and assure the academic quality of the academic program; in fact, the culture of the College seems to be one in which there is a commitment to its review, evaluation, and revision. This work includes significant leadership by faculty through their participation in relevant committees (e.g., the Educational Planning Committee, the Academic and Administrative Procedures Committee), as well as through the initiative and efforts of the academic administration. The team heard many examples of the ways in which evidence and data have been gathered, disseminated, and discussed to inform the development and refinement of programs, most notably the *Connections* program and its various curricular components. There are also efforts underway to engage faculty within their departments to develop plans for assessing the effectiveness of their curricula in achieving declared student learning outcomes. More will be said about this in Standard 8 of this report.

Connecticut College has served for some time as the college of record for the Institute for Field Research (Los Angeles); the Umbra Institute (Perugia, Italy); and the National Theater Institute

(Waterford, CT). As part of these arrangements, course descriptions have been reviewed and approved by the College's Academic and Administrative Procedures Committee. The College's relationship with these institutions is being examined and, in some cases, is being revised. Additional oversight of the Institute for Field Research is currently being instituted through the placement of faculty members on its Academic Advisory Council, review of field school directors, and periodic on-site visits. The relationship with Umbra is being discontinued (Fall 2018) in response to an external review of the Italian Department's approved study away programs. On the other hand, a closer relationship is being explored with the National Theater Institute—providing an institutional sponsor and financial, admissions, and registrar services—a move that is expected to benefit the College by attracting strong theater students. The amendments being made to these relationships will ensure more systematized and regular oversight of the credits being sponsored by the College.

Undergraduate Degree Program: The College's curriculum includes an appropriate and intentional combination of a liberal arts foundation (currently implemented via an "old" set of general education requirements and the phasing in of the *Connections* program) and a more focused major course of study. Students can enhance their major by participating in one of the College's certificate-granting interdisciplinary centers. These centers provide certifications and opportunities for intellectual engagement (e.g., a core course, a senior integrative seminar, and a capstone project) and co-curricular programming (e.g., internships) for students interested in enhancing their major in one of four interdisciplinary areas: international studies, the environment, arts and technology, and community action and public policy. Participation in the centers averages about 15% of each graduating class, and the team heard from faculty and students about the value of these coordinated opportunities for integrated learning.

The mission of Connecticut College emphasizes putting the liberal arts into action, and there are many resources for students to accomplish this. The team heard from faculty and staff responsible for connecting students with global and local engagement opportunities and internships, as well as those who coordinate study away from the College. Approximately 50% of students study abroad through an approved program. The Walter Commons for Global Study and Engagement, a new institutional entity, is housed in a newly renovated space that brings together a variety of offices to coordinate curricular and co-curricular opportunities, increasing awareness and collaboration and adding value to the *Connections* program.

General Education: The greatest focus of discussion regarding the academic program over the past five years or so has been the development of the *Connections* program, the College's new general education curriculum. This curricular revision began as a response to data gathered through the College's participation in the *Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education* (*Wabash Study*) from 2006 through 2010. The *Wabash Study* collected data on the experiences and intellectual growth of 112 members of the class of 2010. "The study used student self-reports of their experiences, attitudes, and aspirations as well as standardized tests and surveys to measure liberal arts outcomes and aptitudes like critical thinking, moral reasoning, and leadership." The study's findings raised concerns about student engagement and academic rigor. These concerns led the College to design a program of courses and co-curricular opportunities that develop integrative thinking and interdisciplinarity, give students agency in charting their own educational paths, and offer ways for students to meaningfully engage with the world. The

program includes a new model for advising students, development opportunities for faculty and staff, and increased opportunities for collaboration for all members of the community.

The new curriculum, effective for students entering in 2016, requires that students complete a minimum of forty credits as part of their general education program. This includes a first-year seminar, a language and cultures requirement, a “ConnCourse” (an interdisciplinary class designed to discover connections with real-world issues), writing courses, and modes-of-inquiry courses that are a part of each thematically-organized integrative pathway. Students who do not pursue a pathway can apply instead to one of the certificate programs offered by the centers or can complete coursework in all five modes of inquiry. The *Connections* program also requires a Reflection seminar in the senior year, which requires students to reflect on and synthesize the ideas they’ve learned throughout their four years, as they prepare to present their knowledge at an all-College symposium.

This is a transitional moment for the College with respect to its general education requirements. The first class of students to enter under the *Connections* requirements started in the fall of 2016 (the class of 2020), so there are now two cohorts of students working their way through the program, even as current juniors and seniors are accountable to the prior requirements. During this transitional phase, significant time and resources are being directed to the development and refinement of the components of the *Connections* program. As mentioned above, students are required to select a pathway (a set of courses from a variety of disciplines organized around a common theme), join an Interdisciplinary Center, or complete all five Modes of Inquiry. Currently, there are eleven pathways, each overseen by a faculty Pathway Coordinator, and more pathways are being developed in response to student and faculty interest.

The team reviewed the many documents and data provided about *Connections*, spoke with a variety of administrators and faculty colleagues responsible for implementing and refining various aspects of the *Connections* program, and heard from first-year and sophomore students about their early experiences. The new curriculum is resonant with the College’s mission to put the liberal arts into action; there is genuine and widespread commitment to achieving its ambitious goals; and it is admirably coherent and forward looking. The team was impressed by the energy and commitment with which it has been launched.

It will be important to monitor *Connections* in a thorough and intentional way in the coming years. While the team heard anecdotal evidence from many individuals about the ways in which the *Connections* program has enhanced the experience of students, faculty, and staff during its first two years, there is the opportunity to gather data about the learning outcomes of students participating in this program, and faculty members have ideas about how to do this. It is noteworthy that the College has started to assess outcomes of certain components of the new curriculum. However, the College does not yet have a plan in place to gather direct evidence of learning outcomes at the institutional level (see also Standard 8). In addition, the College will want to continue to evaluate the ongoing resource needs created by the program and to balance those needs with its other commitments. Building on the work of the summer 2016 working group, this will include examining the workloads of faculty and staff and monitoring the plan for transitioning away from the grant funding that has supported its implementation.

Major or Concentration: Connecticut College students choose from forty-two disciplinary and interdisciplinary majors, which they typically declare in their sophomore year. There has been an intentional reduction in the number of majors in recent years, a move made in response to shifts in student enrollment (e.g., Medieval Studies is now a concentration within the Classics major). The current array of majors is appropriate for a liberal arts College; the most popular majors are Economics, Psychology, and Behavioral Neuroscience. Students may elect to pursue two, or in the rare case, three majors, and can also opt to declare one or two minors.

The College has finalized an agreement with Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) to establish a dual degree (B.A./B.S.) program, involving a new interdisciplinary major in environmental engineering that will include study at both institutions. The proposal for this program was reviewed by the Academic and Administrative Procedures Committee and endorsed by the faculty. It will require students in the program to study for two years at Connecticut College, spend their junior year at WPI, and then return to the College for their senior year. Students have the option of earning a B.S. at WPI in a fifth year of study. The team reviewed the proposal for the new major, which appears to be academically rigorous and sound, and will require a mechanism for oversight of students' experiences during their junior year at WPI.

Graduate Degree Programs: Currently, there are no active graduate degree programs offered by Connecticut College. Several master's programs were discontinued following the CIHE-NEASC comprehensive review in 2007 and a subsequent internal review of the programs. The one graduate degree that potentially could be offered again in the future is the master of arts degree in psychology. This program, however, is on hiatus, and is currently accepting no new students. While there is a commitment to the idea that a small master's program in psychology is consistent with the College's mission, the Psychology Department remains undecided about whether to continue the program. They affirmed a plan to resolve the status of the program within the next five years, following some impending retirements and anticipated new hires. This will allow the department to determine, in consultation with appropriate faculty committees and administrative offices, what form a revived program might take and whether the necessary enthusiasm, time, and resources are in place to support a successful program.

Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit: The College currently awards the bachelor of arts degree, which requires that students complete 128 credit hours for graduation (at least 64 of which must have been completed at the College). These credits are distributed across general education courses (the *Connections* program), elective courses, and courses in the major. The team reviewed the catalogue and other website materials and concluded that the requirements for graduation are easily located and clearly stated. (This includes descriptions of both the old general education requirements, which apply to students entering prior to 2016, and the new *Connections* curriculum, which applies to those entering in 2016 and beyond.) The curriculum includes a wide array of courses across disciplines appropriate to a liberal arts institution, and students readily can meet degree requirements within the context of their required 128 credit hours.

The College has clear and well-understood mechanisms for overseeing the award of academic credit. These mechanisms are described in the self-study and were affirmed by the faculty and administrators with whom the team met. The development of the curriculum and the award of

credit are overseen by various faculty committees (including the Educational Planning Committee and the Academic and Administrative Procedures Committee) and academic administrative offices, including the Dean of the Faculty and the Dean of the College who work closely with the Registrar and the Study Away office. The learning goals developed by academic departments for the major are appropriate to the bachelor of arts degree; the recent implementation of DegreeWorks has allowed faculty, staff, and students to more effectively track students' progress through their general education and major requirements.

The College does not offer competency-based programs, nor does it offer credit for prior experiential learning. The award of transfer credit and Advanced Placement credits is overseen by the Registrar and the relevant policies are clearly described in the College catalogue and on the Registrar's Office website. These policies are appropriate to the institution's mission and consistent with those of other similar institutions.

The self-study offers evidence demonstrating that students' academic experiences conform to the College's credit hour policy. In May 2018, the faculty approved new catalogue language that clarifies and specifies expectations for faculty instruction and out-of-class work by students that is consistent with the Commission's policy on the award of academic credit. The language clarifies the specific requirements and will help to ensure faculty understand the College's policy and how it relates to their courses.

The self-study references the College's commitment to academic integrity, reflected most prominently in its longstanding honor code. The committee heard from students that the honor code is well understood and valued as a core feature of the College's institutional identity, and evidence was provided in the self-study from student surveys about the centrality of the honor code in students' decisions to matriculate at the College. (See also Standards 5 and 9.) More generally, faculty play an appropriate role in the assurance of academic integrity in the award of credit through the Academic and Administrative Procedures Committee and the Educational Planning Committee.

5. Students

Admissions: Admissions applications were at an all-time high for fall 2018, at over 6,400, representing an 18% increase from 2017. The College received feedback that applicants were motivated to apply in part by the new curriculum. The actual enrollment in fall 2017 of 1,766 full-time students consisted of approximately 15% first generation students, 20% students of color, and 7.5% international students. The team also learned at the time of their visit that domestic students of color and first-generation college students admitted through early decision were already up by 100 for the incoming class. The College has a national affiliation with the Posse Foundation and welcomed its ninth cohort of Posse scholars to campus in fall 2017. The College is committed to a 1 percentage point increase per year in diversity as reflected in its strategic plan. This goal is a part of ongoing conversations within admissions with respect to resource allocation for travel and increasing recruitment in certain geographic regions. Following the site visit, the team reviewed evidence that the College has a strategy for achieving this goal, and it appears to be making good progress; the enrolled students of the class of 2022 include

23% domestic students of color and 9% international students, the largest in the College's history.

The Admissions website is easy to navigate and acquaints prospective students and their families with important information. It provides statistical information about the student body, campus community, and student outcomes; an outline of application, admission, and financial aid processes; and case studies illustrating how students have integrated their many experiences at the College. Further, it shares admissions essays written by enrolled students that offer prospective students an overview of the types of students admitted to the College. The website has been updated to provide a description of *Connections*. Standards for admission help ensure that students have the qualifications compatible with institutional objectives. The Common Application is the starting point for the admissions process, followed by campus visits and interviews, which are strongly encouraged. The College described a rigorous process for reviewing and vetting all applications by trained admissions officers.

The College is committed to meeting the full demonstrated need of its students. In 2017, the College introduced merit-based scholarships. Today, 56% of students receive need-based aid, compared with 49% of students six years ago. The Financial Aid Office has a practice of reaching out to prospective students to educate them about the financial aid process. The office also partners with a local financial institution to provide financial literacy education to students. Upon exiting the College, students receive counseling on managing educational loan responsibilities.

The College's retention efforts begin at admitted student open house events, which are designed to connect students through campus visits and social media. This is followed by a comprehensive five-day orientation program for first-year students the week before classes begin. These programs, combined with the first-year seminar curriculum, familiarize students with the wide array of supportive campus resources and help them acclimate to college life.

Retention and graduation rates, as reflected in the Data First Forms, have remained relatively stable and are higher than national averages. Over the last four years, the first to second year retention rate has averaged around 90% and the six-year graduation rate has averaged around 83%. In an effort to improve these outcomes, since 2015, the College has conducted in-depth analyses to understand patterns of attrition. The College's study of attrition does not suggest financial aid as a main factor; rather, it identified the following factors as contributing to its cause: poor academic performance, preference for different geographic locations, preference for larger institutions, and the desire for majors not offered at the College. Recognizing that affordability correlates with attrition, the current strategic plan commits the College to meticulously address issues of affordability. In addition, early indications show that the new *Connections* curriculum is expected to improve student persistence. First to second year retention in fall 2017, the first cohort under the new curriculum, was 90.7%, compared with 88.7% the previous year.

Student Services and Co-Curricular Experiences: Through restructuring and increasing resources, the College has enhanced student services and co-curricular experiences considerably to ensure student success at this residential institution. A priority of the *Building on Strength*

strategic plan is to enrich the student experience. It outlines the goals related to campus living, career services, and athletics, which inform the overall direction of student services and co-curricular experiences.

Guided by the strategic plan, the College subscribes to the concept of “full participation” and all members of the community are encouraged to participate in the life of the College. To operationalize this concept, the College made a significant change in its administrative structure by establishing the Student Experience Group to enhance student services and co-curricular experiences. The new structure represents a partnership of shared responsibility among three key leaders and their teams: the Dean of the College provides leadership for all academic aspects of the student experience; the Dean of Students focuses on integrating learning across all dimensions of the student experience, helping students to make meaningful connections; and the Dean of Institutional Equity and Inclusion collaborates with these areas, coordinating efforts that promote and ensure a welcoming and inclusive learning community. This differs from the previous structure in which these three areas were led by a single senior officer. All three of the positions are cabinet-level, ensuring that matters related directly to the student experience receive the highest attention. The partnership developed among these three administrators is intended to provide a seamless integrated learning environment. The three deans meet routinely and the collective Student Experience Group convenes regularly for planning purposes.

In 2014, following an in-depth study of the residential experience, the College began implementing a new model for housing first-year students. The College renovated a mixed-class residence to create dedicated first-year floors to permit first-year students to live in closer proximity to each other. Additionally, in 2017, another residence hall was renovated entirely to create the first residence hall to house only first-year students. Approximately 40% of first-year students now reside on first-year floors, and the remaining are clustered on mixed-class floors. Survey data indicate that co-locating first-year students in first-year-only residences gives them a greater sense of community and promotes spontaneous socializing, which results in higher satisfaction with the on-campus living experience. In the future, the College plans to add additional first-year-only residential spaces. The College will continue to evaluate this approach.

Reconfiguring first-year living arrangements has provided a means to implement additional first-year programming, including introducing students to meaningful ways to engage in campus life. “Camel Chats” is a program whereby residentially-based student leaders (housefellows and floor governors) meet one-on-one with each of their first-year residents to reflect on their choices and experiences during their initial time on campus. The information from these conversations guides future programming and support initiatives implemented by student life professionals.

The team heard positive reviews from students about the strong support they receive through academic advising and the Academic Resource Center (ARC), which opened in fall 2013. Pre-major academic advising for first-year students is provided by teams which include first-year seminar faculty; staff from a variety of student-focused campus offices; career advisors; and student peer advisers. Team advising is organized around first-year seminars, and incoming students are asked to select their first, second, and third choice out of 35 seminars. The advising teams plan the co-curricular experiences that complement the academic subject matter before the summer break and in early August. The level of staff engagement varies depending on the

faculty member's approach. Overall, this coordinated, high-touch approach to instruction, advising, and support streamlines the guidance and information that students need early-on to refine their educational path. Further, students reported that the relationships and networks formed through this process help them navigate the rest of their undergraduate experience. The College has implemented assessment methods to evaluate the effectiveness of this approach, noting a 163% increase in the number of students utilizing the ARC.

Two major task forces, one on career preparation and the other on athletics, completed their work in the spring of 2017, and the College is addressing the recommendations of both task force reports. The Career Task Force recommended updating and starting funded internships earlier to ensure that the College is providing enough opportunities for experiential learning and student preparation for the job market. The College has already enhanced student engagement with the Office of Career and Professional Development by connecting the office to the first-year seminar program and beginning workshops in a student's first year. The College is also relocating the office to a more central location. Finally, a new initiative, Career-Informed Learning (CIL), engages alumni and parents who are industry professionals with students in select classes to provide students opportunities to work on real-world problems. The pilot began with an Environmental Studies course and led to additional courses in other disciplines.

The findings and recommendations from the Athletics Task Force report led to new funding, staffing, and policies for club sports. Additionally, the report recommended that the Athletic Department begin developing dashboards for each sport to track students' athletic experiences and academic achievements.

The team saw thriving and productive students engaged in positive ways with the many curricular and co-curricular opportunities. It was clear in talking with students that they are truly enjoying their Connecticut College experience. The College has impressive, dedicated student leaders. Members of the SGA expressed that student accessibility to administration, faculty, and the board of trustees was "phenomenal". The team observed students utilizing the vibrant spaces for studying and socializing in the library, Crozier-Williams, the athletics facilities, and the North complex, among other spaces. Students shared with the team that there is a need for more common spaces for spontaneous gathering and socializing. They are pleased that this is a priority in the strategic plan. The students also identified the need to increase funding for student activities. The students noted their appreciation for a \$100,000 supplement that the president recently added to the budget for student activities.

The College's commitment to creating a welcoming environment is demonstrated by the implementation of inclusive policies and practices such as gender-neutral facilities, programs, and resources for LBGTQIA students; increasing professional staff to provide multicultural counseling; and expanding the chaplaincy to support Muslim and Jewish students. Several members of the community mentioned the positive work of the new division of institutional equity and inclusion. They also expressed a need for a campus climate survey. The dean of institutional equity and inclusion, in collaboration with the IRP Office, plans to develop a survey instrument to be administered next year. Data from the survey will inform efforts to increase cultural competence for students as well as staff and faculty.

6. Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship

Faculty and Academic Staff: As documented in the Data First Forms, the Connecticut College faculty is comprised of 182 full-time and 64 part-time faculty, with an additional 20 adjuncts (primarily athletic coaches). Of full-time faculty members, 63% are tenured and 18% are untenured; lecturers and visitors not on the tenure track constitute 19% of full-time faculty. Among tenured positions, 51 are in the associate rank while 64 are full professors. The teaching load for tenure-track faculty is five courses per year; the teaching load for non-tenure-track lecturers is six courses. Faculty are distributed within a structure of 37 departmental or similar units. Considered broadly, the structure reflects the liberal arts mission of Connecticut College.

There is a clear and deep commitment among faculty members to the teaching mission of the College. Similarly, staff partners in the College's interdisciplinary centers, academic resource centers, and in educational technology are equally committed to student learning and success. The College is rightly proud of this commitment, and of the dedication of its faculty and staff to excellence in teaching.

In addition to teaching, faculty responsibilities include scholarship, service on College governance committees, and advising. Faculty members are committed to shared governance. The College annually produces a rolling five-year Staffing Plan, a process defined in the *Policies and Procedures: Information for Faculty, Administrators, and Trustees* handbook (IFF). As part of this process, the dean of the faculty, in consultation with faculty leadership, sets priorities for allocation of open tenure-track positions, emergent faculty line needs, and other staffing resources required by departments. All needs are based on the long-term curricular plan developed by the Educational Planning Committee (EPC).

As discussed on page 4 of this report, enrollments have declined recently. As a result, the College is considering bringing the size of the faculty and staff into alignment with the projected size of the student body; doing this within the context of meeting future general and major curricular needs will require open engagement of the faculty and administration. A retirement incentive was offered in spring 2018, and an "optimal size of the College" review is planned. Particular attention is being paid to maintaining adequate numbers of staffing for majors and other programs.

The faculty is qualified for their roles and duties; a terminal degree (Ph.D. or M.F.A.) is held by over 93% of full-time faculty members. While some members comment that time for scholarship is limited by uncompensated teaching duties and service, there is ample evidence of a faculty substantially engaged in scholarship and creative activity, as represented by publications (many with student co-authors), exhibitions, performances, and on-campus faculty-student research through the interdisciplinary centers (~80 seniors per year) and capstone experiences.

Searches for faculty appointments are conducted nationally through collaboration among the dean of the faculty, the dean of institutional equity and inclusion, and departmental search committees. Each job advertisement carries a statement of Connecticut College as an equal opportunity employer. Much attention has been brought to bear on improving faculty diversity, through all stages of the search process, and the College has received national attention for its

success. Notably, the College is a founding member of the *Creating Connections Consortium* (C3), a Mellon Foundation-funded organization that “seeks to address the challenges of diversity in higher education.” The search process includes specific strategies for building diverse candidate pools, implicit bias training, and tracking diversity from applicant pools through semifinalist and finalist candidate groups. The percentage of full-time faculty members who are persons of color has risen from 16.4% to 26.4% over the past ten years, with the incoming cohort of new faculty hires being the most diverse on record. Continued dedication among the faculty, search committees, and campus leadership to this College priority is important.

Faculty salaries are adjusted on an annual basis with reference to a group of 26 peer institutions, as permitted by resources. Staff salaries are benchmarked against local and regional markets, with a compensation floor of 80% of the market average. Increases to the faculty and staff salary pools are set through the budget process with input from the Priorities, Planning, and Budget Committee. The Committee on Faculty Compensation recommends across-the-board raises and gap-closing and equity adjustments for the faculty. Among the selected peer institution group, the assistant professor average salaries currently rank in the 46th percentile (or near the median), associate professors at the 27th, and full professors at the 19th.

Departments are responsible for equitable assignments of teaching responsibilities. The development of the new *Connections* curriculum is an example of how the faculty are willing—enthusiastically—to dedicate considerable resources of time and energy to issues of significant import to the academic life of the College and the success of its students.

By the same token, the development of the new general education curriculum brings with it a new set of obligations for the faculty to provide new courses (e.g., first-year seminars, ConnCourses) and curricular programs (e.g., Integrated Pathways). This has required, and will continue to require, redirection of some faculty teaching resources to the *Connections* curriculum. Some faculty members expressed apprehension about the extra work the transition will entail, with potential attendant negative impacts on time for scholarship. These commitments will have to be balanced carefully, particularly for tenure-track faculty members.

The IFF defines faculty members’ responsibilities, appointment policies, and other procedures governing faculty professional life. This is a living document, under near-continuous review by the faculty, and is the subject of frequent faculty legislative action. Recently, language was approved by vote for policies governing parental leave and termination for cause; Title IX issues have been modified to bring the faculty handbook in alignment with the student and staff handbooks.

Criteria for reappointment, tenure, and promotion are also articulated in the IFF, and include statements on teaching, scholarship/creative activity, service, and advising expectations that are consistent with the College’s mission and purposes. Reappointment, tenure, and promotion evaluation procedures are overseen by the dean of the faculty and the faculty Committee on Appointments, Promotion, and Tenure. Faculty members additionally submit annual reports on their professional activities, which are reviewed by the dean of the faculty.

Students complete evaluations of each of their courses to provide feedback to instructors and to facilitate course revision and improvement. Student evaluations are included in faculty members' personnel files for reappointment, tenure, and promotion review. Connecticut College is rightly proud of its faculty members' dedication to excellence in teaching. As stated in the self-study, it is anticipated that the newly launched five-stage assessment process for learning outcomes in the majors will provide direct evidence of student achievement of departments' published student learning outcomes.

Scholarly expectations are clearly stated in the IFF. Excellence in scholarship and creative activity, in addition to teaching, is a primary criterion for appointment review. The IFF states that tenured faculty members are expected to maintain the same high quality of scholarship or activities in the arts that earned them tenure. Furthermore, it states that "[a]t all stages of a faculty member's career there should be evidence that the individual continues to develop in his or her chosen field." (*See IFF*).

In the IFF, there is a statement that the Board of Trustees endorses the American Association of University Professors' 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure (*AAUP Policy Documents & Reports*, 2015 edition, pp. 13-19) (www.aaup.org).

Instruction, advising, and academic support for students are delivered by a variety of academic staff in addition to faculty. These staff are located within interdisciplinary centers, academic resource centers, the library, and instructional technology. The College offers considerable support for their professional development. The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), of national reputation, provides a variety of workshops and seminars for staff and faculty to improve teaching practice, and fosters a culture of striving for teaching excellence. Academic staff are evaluated annually by their supervisors.

Teaching and Learning: Almost all courses at Connecticut College are conducted face-to-face and meet the standards of the CIHE-NEASC credit-hour policy. The scholarly research and disciplinary training of individual faculty members determine their course offerings, in consultation within their department or program.

There is a rich array of opportunities for professional development in teaching for both faculty and staff, especially through the opportunities offered by the CTL, instructional development specialists and librarians, and inclusive-instruction initiatives. During the 2016-17 academic year, twelve stand-alone teaching development events were held, each with an average of 24.5 attendees, for a total of 294 individuals. An annual end-of-semester teaching development conference, run by the CTL, offered 26 development events with 207 different faculty and staff members attending at least one event, with average attendance of 22.5 individuals. In its conversations with faculty and administration, the team heard about the value of these professional development events and other initiatives, which collectively promote a sense of intellectual community.

There is a renewed commitment to the importance of advising, especially for general education and preparing students for post-graduation careers. The new team-advising approach that

includes faculty, staff, and peer-student advisers should contribute to student success and retention.

A number of different types of resources have been put in place to develop the quality of advising by faculty and staff, including a manual for pre-major advisers, training sessions provided by the Dean of the College, and various panels and workshops provided by the CTL. Particular attention has been paid to incoming faculty, first-year seminar instructors, and study-away advisers, supported in part by a multi-year institutional grant from the Christian A. Johnson Endeavor Foundation (\$800,000). Concurrently, “availability to advisees and current students” and “effective academic advising” have been added to the IFF as criteria for tenure and promotion. Student surveys of advising satisfaction provide preliminary evidence that students are responding well to the new system. In the future, advising quality could be assessed against more direct expected outcomes of the advising system. The new *Connections* advising system will require thoughtful and intentional monitoring to assure the quality of advising among faculty, staff, and peer student advisers.

The faculty is demonstrably active in scholarship and creative activity, collectively completing 223 publications and 121 performances and exhibitions of creative work in 2016-17. There is strong support for the scholarship of faculty. Financial support is offered by the dean of the faculty office (i.e., eight different funds targeted at different career stages and project configurations), and by some interdisciplinary centers (three categories of awards). A wide range of funding sources for student-faculty research are also available. Applications by individual faculty members for external grants and fellowships are supported by The Office of Corporate, Foundation, and Government Relations, and even greater support is desired based on a recent faculty survey. The Nancy Batson Nisbet Rash Research Award recognizes faculty scholarly accomplishment annually. Continued support for professional development is a notable feature of the current strategic plan.

As a concluding point, the team was impressed with the willingness of faculty and staff members to reflect on their work and to consider the best interests of both their students and the College at large. Faculty and staff who have committed substantial professional time and energy into curricular review, committee service, new course development, and other significant investments in the long-term future of the College have done so, remarkably, with good humor, constructive discussion, and an optimistic view of the future. This seems to be borne not only of deep respect for colleagues, but also confidence in the ability of the faculty and staff as a body of educational professionals to succeed. This spirit is an institutional strength and a tremendous asset as Connecticut College prepares for its future.

7. *Institutional Resources*

Like many private, liberal arts Colleges, Connecticut College relies heavily on tuition revenue. As reported in the self-study, “even small fluctuations in annual enrollments, coupled with increased pressures to deliver more financial aid to worthy students, can put a strain on operating margins, as we have seen in recent years.” Led by the president, the College’s senior administration has identified a challenge in its declining enrollment and has developed a plan

both to reverse this trend and to reevaluate resource demands. The College is well aware of the short-term trade-offs being made in the areas of information, physical, and technological resources, as the senior administration responds to resource constraints. The College's strategic plan outlines its priorities, and the recently initiated fundraising campaign presents an opportunity to build the resources needed to manage these needs. The College's Board of Trustees includes a number of skilled professionals with financial expertise who are serving as committed thought-partners in this work. It will be important to continue to raise awareness about the pressure on the College's business model to ensure that the community remains committed to forge a path towards financial sustainability.

Human Resources: The evaluation team enjoyed interacting with the College's dedicated, collegial, and collaborative faculty and staff. Connecticut College has a stable workforce, as evidenced by the longevity and low annual turnover rate of its faculty and staff. Average length of service of faculty is 16 years with 4% annual attrition. For staff, average length of service is nearly 11 years with 8% annual attrition.

In its meeting with Staff Council and in its open meeting with the staff, the team learned of a few areas for continued focus. While the College historically has committed \$1,000 per employee per year for professional development, an evaluation of the flexibility of these funds may be warranted to ensure the staff are provided access to meaningful professional development that strengthens the institution's workforce.

During these conversations, the team learned that the annual evaluation process was not consistently conducted by all managers, often due to workload constraints or management transitions. The College's dedicated staff have done a remarkable job maintaining effectiveness while "doing more with less," a phrase the team heard numerous times during its time on campus. As the College continues its "optimal size" review (described on pages 4 and 15 of this report), it will be important to strategically reallocate human capital towards its highest priorities, including reviewing and potentially discontinuing activities and initiatives that do not align with those goals.

Terms of employment are specified in the College's employee handbook, which is published on the College's website, along with policies regarding benefits, nondiscrimination, affirmative action, dispute resolution, Title IX, and others. These materials are supplemented by a robust *Hiring Guide For Managers*, which is an internal resource developed to help provide a uniform approach to hiring.

Financial Resources: Over the last five years, the College has begun to experience significant financial challenges. As noted on page 4 of this report, full-time-equivalent undergraduate enrollment has decreased from an all-time high of 1,898 in 2012 to 1,783 in the current academic year; the first-year tuition discount rate has jumped from 27% in 2014 to 39% in the current academic year. By strategically reducing expenses, the College has maintained balanced cash operating budgets through this period, although, when accounting for depreciation, the audited financials show deficits on an accrual basis. In response to these challenges, the senior administration has developed a path towards financial sustainability, which involves increasing the size of the endowment through a campaign, revising its enrollment strategy, and right-sizing

the faculty and staff to align with enrollment. To enable these strategies, the College has invested in admissions and advancement in the near-term to increase revenues that will protect and grow financial resources going forward.

Under the leadership of the new vice president for college advancement, the College has embarked on a comprehensive campaign, with plans to increase the size of its endowment to \$500,000,000. The campaign's working goal is \$300,000,000 over seven years, beginning July 1, 2017, and the College has already raised more than \$75 million toward that goal. The College has identified funding priorities in connection with the strategic plan that align with its path towards financial sustainability. The priorities are raising \$130,000,000 for the endowment (which will increase in value over the life of the campaign), \$90,000,000 for capital improvements, and \$80,000,000 for academic programming. Shortly after the team's campus visit, the College announced that it had received two gifts totaling \$20 million, which will be used to renovate Palmer Auditorium and Castle Court into a new center for performance and creative research.

The College's revised admissions strategy includes awarding merit aid to students who demonstrate achievement and promise, waiving the application fee for all students, increasing travel opportunities for admissions staff, improving campus tours, and enhancing high school outreach efforts.

Salary and wages represent 50% of the College's total budget, making compensation the single largest expense category. Accordingly, as described in Standards 2 and 6, the College plans to right-size the faculty and staff to better align with projected enrollment. The College has begun two initiatives to control its compensation costs. First, a Strategic Position Review Committee is considering all new or vacant staff positions for potential savings or reorganization. It extended the campus policy of a six-week delay for refilling positions to twelve weeks. As a result, the College currently is holding open 24 vacant positions, a decision which has resulted in over \$500,000 in savings in FY18. Second, the College offered a voluntary retirement incentive to help reduce compensation expenses in FY19 and beyond. The vice president of finance and administration and the assistant vice president of human resources consider these efforts a launching point for future initiatives, because these alone will not close the College's budget shortfall.

These efforts are being supplemented by a host of other strategic revenue-enhancing and cost-cutting initiatives, including a health benefits redesign, new summer and winter programs, collaborative partnerships, a review of campus services, utility savings, and others. These initiatives are critical to bend the College's cost curve to better align resources with institutional priorities.

Currently, the College uses different accounting methodologies for preparing its audited financial statements and for managing its internal finances. The audited financials follow Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP), which match revenue and expenses, while the College's internal financials are prepared using the cash method, where revenue and expenses are recorded only when the corresponding cash is received or payments are made. As a result, the College's \$9 million depreciation expense is included in the accrual-based audited financials, but

not in the cash-based internal budgets. While the board and the vice president of finance and administration are aware of, and account for, this difference, the benefits of keeping two different systems should be evaluated. Providing for depreciation, as the accrual-based method permits, ensures that budget managers will consider critical information not reflected in the cash method—specifically, the ongoing costs required to maintain the institution’s physical plant.

Connecticut College has prudently managed its long-term debt. Debt service as a percentage of the operating budget is 4.7%, which is in keeping with the College’s financial policies. The College has a \$600,000 emergency reserve, \$3,400,000 in prior-year cash operating surplus, and a \$10,000,000 line of credit it has not recently used.

Information, Physical, and Technological Resources: Connecticut College’s 750-acre arboretum campus is a tremendous asset that is well-utilized to support the College’s teaching and research mission. As the team observed in its facilities tour, the College has invested in a number of spaces on campus, for example, Walter Commons (\$1.6 million), Hillel House (\$1.4 million), New London Hall (\$10.6 million), and Charles E. Shain Library (\$9.8 million). Through a facilities tour and open meetings with students, faculty, and staff, the team heard concerns about deferred maintenance in some academic buildings and residence halls, particularly with respect to accessibility and underlying infrastructure. The College has engaged Sasaki Associates to develop a campus master plan. This master planning process has provided the information and analysis needed to prioritize the facilities-related initiatives described in the strategic plan and enabled by the campaign.

Overseen by the vice president for information services, the College operates a merged information services organization that includes the library, instructional technology, administrative services, networks, and telecommunications. Information Services has a robust planning and evaluation process, which includes publishing annual objectives, reporting on accomplishments towards those objectives, and completing a strategic plan for the division every 3 years, the most recent in May 2017. The department staff are committed to serving the campus community, as evidenced by their regular meetings with SGA leadership to receive student feedback regarding technology and library issues. The staff also support the *Connections* curriculum by serving as advisers to first-year seminars.

Regarding administrative services, the College uses Banner 8 for its finance, human resources, advancement, and student and financial aid systems. The College is investing in a multi-phased upgrade to Banner 9 and is on target to implement this change during the next academic year. The College is also investing in new advancement software to support the campaign.

The newly renovated Charles E. Shain Library is designed for modern teaching and learning and is clearly a well-utilized resource by the community. Last academic year, the library’s gate count was nearly 400,000, up 10% from the prior year. As seen in the Data First Forms, however, the library’s materials budget has been reduced by 20% over the last four years from \$1.55 million to \$1.25 million. Mirroring student usage, these reductions have been taken almost entirely from the library’s printed materials budget, allowing the College to maintain its digital subscriptions. To ensure that faculty and students have access to the materials they need, the College plans to continue to leverage the CTW (Connecticut, Trinity, and Wesleyan) Library Consortium, which

was established to share resources and create efficiencies among the three schools. To manage these trade-offs, Information Services has engaged the faculty and administration. For example, a Materials Selection Committee was created recently to help faculty navigate these resource decisions.

In other areas of Information Services, short-term budget cuts have been mitigated by the College's resourceful staff. The College had planned to establish and grow business intelligence services to support campus departments in their analytics, reporting, and decision-making. However, the FTE for this initiative was eliminated during the budget process. The department also has lost an administrative assistant and 0.5 FTE in the library. The retirements of several Information Services staff members will put additional staffing pressure on the department. The College is pursuing additional strategies to realize savings, including reviewing and revising its mobile device policy and buying certain equipment rather than leasing it. These efforts will allow the department to reallocate savings to its highest priorities as outlined in the 2017-2020 Information Services Strategic Plan.

8. Educational Effectiveness

It is clear that Connecticut College is highly committed to ensuring the quality, integrity, and effectiveness of its academic programs and the success of its students. Since its interim CIHE-NEASC report, the College has made considerable progress on establishing a systematic approach to measuring student learning. More specifically, the College has made substantial progress on formally articulating intended learning outcomes and advancing assessment in the major.

Standard of Achievement: To ensure appropriate levels of student achievement for its programs, the College uses multiple mechanisms and structures (e.g., AAPC, departmental self-study, and external review) to monitor levels of academic rigor (see also Standards 4 and 6). The team's review of a broad range of syllabi, as well as information gained from meetings with faculty and administrators, indicate that the College has in place standards of achievement appropriate to the degree it awards.

Assessment of Learning: The College has articulated what students are expected to learn at the course, major, and institutional/general education level. Institutional-level learning goals reflect institutional mission and values. The College's process of understanding what and how students are learning has focused on the course, major, and the general education level. It has been using a variety of methods to assess student learning, by gathering evidence based on direct and indirect measures.

Over the past five years, the College has made noteworthy progress towards establishing systematic processes to assess student learning, and has increased its support for academic assessment. In August 2015, the College added a staff member to its IRP office, and the Office has been working closely with the academic departments and the CTL by providing training and guidance materials. These collaborative efforts have helped make the College's assessment efforts in the major more organized, focused, and uniform.

At the departmental level, in the 2016-17 academic year, the College launched a five-stage assessment process for student learning in the major. Currently, the focus is on finalizing measurable learning outcomes and curricular mapping (stages 1–3); it is anticipated that departments will have completed stages 4 and 5 (data collection, analysis, and planned use of results) during the 2018-19 academic year. As evidenced from the newly created dashboard for departmental reports, there are variations among departments in their pace of progress, and most departments are at the early stages with respect to the five-stage process. The College will need to ensure that all academic departments make timely progress with regard to their assessment responsibilities and goals.

Conversations with administrators and faculty members suggest that the College currently relies heavily on the two-person IRP Office in advancing systematic learning assessment in the major. (See also Standard 2.) While there is a need for the administration, academic departments, and faculty to work jointly towards the timely completion of the five-stage assessment process, finding ways to recognize and reward the work required to advance assessment could increase the pace of progress.

As evidenced from the E-Series Forms, prior to launching the five-stage assessment process, many departments had been using senior capstone/seminar projects or other culminating senior experience to assess student learning in the major (84% of its 2017 graduating class participated in some form of capstone work). Faculty members are conducting high-quality assessments for the major, and they shared examples of using course-embedded capstone assessments to improve student learning. Yet, the E-Series Forms did not provide much evidence of the results of this work. The current five-stage assessment process is anticipated to enhance capstone and other assessments, and lead to more systematic documentation of evidence in the coming years.

Regarding assessment of general education goals, the *Wabash Study* findings, discussed previously on page 8 of this report, informed the College's revision of its general education curriculum. Students who entered the College in the fall of 2016 (Class of 2020; currently sophomores) are the first cohort studying with *Connections* as their general education curriculum. Review of course syllabi and conversations with faculty members indicate an alignment between course learning objectives and the overarching goals of the new curriculum. Furthermore, as evidenced from the supporting documents, the College has already started to assess student learning in select components of the new curriculum, specifically the first-year seminars and ConnCourses, and the College has used the results of these assessments for program improvement. It has also collected some baseline data as part of a carefully designed pre- and post-test for these two components. An institutional plan to systematically evaluate student learning in the other components, specifically Integrative Pathways and Modes of Inquiry, still needs to be developed.

Although the College has been gathering institutional-level *indirect* evidence through its annual benchmarking survey (NSSE) for general education goals, now could be an appropriate time to develop a detailed, realistic, and flexible assessment plan to gather institutional-level *direct* evidence of learning in the new general education curriculum, for example, by using uniform rubrics to evaluate student work across individual courses. This would align with the College's

goal to identify an institutional-level assessment initiative. It is anticipated that comprehensive evidence will be gathered as the Classes of 2020 and 2021 move through the new curriculum and as the College continues to fine-tune and expand its Integrative Pathways during this transitional period.

Since 2010, the College has been using a mandatory, College-wide student course evaluation form to assess teaching effectiveness. Additionally, for many years, the College has been administering an optional, supplemental course survey to monitor rigor of coursework.

The College has also begun to develop co-curricular learning goals and systematic assessment processes for the co-curricular and off-campus experiences it offers. By the end of 2017-18, the College has plans to articulate co-curricular goals and then begin work on systematically assessing these goals, building upon several existing assessment measures. For example, in fall 2017, the College launched a new survey of returning study-away students as part of its global engagement goal assessment that measures student growth in various dimensions.

Additional Measures of Outcomes: Over the years, the College has collected a great deal of data on the learning environment and outcomes through multiple benchmarking and institutional surveys, such as the annual NSSE, and has established systematic and sustained processes to use the resulting indirect measures of student success. Institutional accomplishments are most notable in the evidence gathered through alumni outcome studies, which yield rich and useful information demonstrating the success of recent graduates. The annual one-year-out alumni study typically captures around 85% of the graduating class, and outcomes in terms of employment and graduate school attendance remain strong (93% to 95% placement). The five-year-out alumni study yields strong results on outcomes as well. Conversations with administrators indicate that reports based on these surveys have been shared with stakeholders, including the offices of the dean of the faculty and the dean of the College, and that assessment results have been used in planning and to improve teaching, learning, and the curriculum.

Another measure of student success tracked by the College is teacher certification test results. For 2016-2017, the most recent year of results, Connecticut College graduates achieved a 100% pass rate.

Retention and Graduation Rates: In addition to assessment of student learning, the College also routinely uses other measures of educational effectiveness, such as first-to-second-year retention and six-year graduation rates. As evidenced from its recent IPEDS data submissions, for first-time full-time students, the College's first-to-second-year average retention rate has been 90%, and its six-year graduation rate 84%. Comparisons with national averages and similar institutions indicate that the College does well in this regard. As described in Standard 5 of this report, an institutional goal is to further improve both its retention and graduation rates. In recent years, the College has conducted several in-depth withdrawal studies to pinpoint reasons for attrition, which have informed retention efforts.

9. Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure

Established nearly a century ago, Connecticut College's honor code is a significant component of its institutional culture of integrity and a key part of the student experience. Through the honor code, all students pledge to conduct themselves with integrity and this appears to set a high standard of conduct throughout the campus community. The team was encouraged to learn that the honor code is not static; the College continues to review the honor code and its role in the community. Notably, the College is currently reviewing the honor code to determine whether it adequately incorporates "freedom of expression," an important reassessment given the significance and timeliness of the topic. Additionally, the College recently reviewed whether all faculty and staff should also sign the honor code. Though the College ultimately determined that it would be unreasonable to have all faculty and staff give the same pledge that all students give, the College has recently produced a set of mission-aligned "Principles of Community" that articulate such community values as inclusivity, respect, and acting with integrity.

Alleged violations of the honor code are adjudicated by the Honor Council, a body of elected student representatives that is part of the SGA. In the interest of shared governance, the Honor Council is advised by the Associate Dean of Students and has two faculty consultants. The Honor Council is an active organization that reviews multiple cases of alleged academic and social violations of student conduct on a weekly basis. The student code of conduct and the policies and procedures of the Honor Council are detailed on the College's intranet.

The College has not only declared in key institutional documents (e.g. the strategic plan, "Principles of Community") that diversity and inclusivity are institutional priorities, but also has taken steps to improve its policies and processes related to these values. Specifically, as described in Standard 5 of this report, the College created a separate Division of Institutional Equity and Inclusion. Leading this division is a new, cabinet-level dean, who has been working with other institutional leaders to review policies and practices related to discrimination. This has led to some reorganization in roles related to incident response and compliance. The College has also instituted a process to ensure that its policies for addressing grievances related to sexual misconduct are accessible and communicated in a timely fashion.

In 2015, the College redesigned its website. This revision took steps to optimize the user experience by improving ease of navigation and responsiveness to different devices. Additionally, staff who manage website content have been trained so that the website meets Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. The team's review of the website found that it was easy to access information that is typically of interest to students and their families and to the general public. The process for finding basic information about the College and its mission, admission policies, and cost of attendance is straightforward. Policies and procedures for students, faculty, and staff are also available on the College's website. Detailed information about the curriculum can be found in the College's online catalogue; this includes the curricular requirements that apply to the Class of 2018 and Class of 2019 as well as the new *Connections* curriculum that applies to the Class of 2020 and going forward. Information about *Connections* and its goals is prominently displayed on the College's main webpage. The team is encouraged that the College plans to prioritize the presentation of learning goals and the dissemination of assessment results as *Connections* develops.

Affirmation of Compliance: To document the College’s compliance with federal requirements related to Title IV, including relevant requirements of the Higher Education Opportunity Act, the team reviewed the Affirmation of Compliance form that was included in Appendix 1 to the self-study. Connecticut College has disclosed on its website, in print, and in the self-study its policy on transfer of credit and procedures related to student complaints. As referenced in Standard 4, the team found the assignment of credit by the College to be consistent with the federal definition of the credit hour. Finally, on its website, the College notified the public of the evaluation and the opportunity to comment on the self-study. The College made this announcement in its alumni magazine in October 2017, in local newspapers in February 2018, and notified more than 23,000 alumni and parents via email. In November 2017, the College posted a draft of the self-study on a password-protected webpage and asked for feedback from the College community.

Summary

Connecticut College is an impressive institution living up to its mission to “educate students to put the liberal arts into action as citizens of a global society.” The College has significant accomplishments to celebrate in the year of its 100th commencement: completing a \$211 million campaign, as well as launching a new curriculum, strategic plan, campaign, and master planning process. The College is led by a thoughtful, talented board, an effective president and senior administration, and dedicated faculty and staff. These groups are aligned around the College’s mission and values; they work collaboratively to foster an inclusive campus climate where students thrive and seem happy and engaged.

Strengths

- The College has devoted significant energy to the development and implementation of its strategic plan, *Building on Strength*. The plan was derived through an inclusive, broad-based community process and the College is making progress on the priorities outlined therein.
- *Connections* is an impressive curricular innovation that is not only ambitious, but deeply resonant with Connecticut College’s mission to put the liberal arts into action. The team heard from students, faculty, and staff about their appreciation for the integration of experiential components in *Connections* through internships, community partnerships, and more. The ethos of *Connections*—specifically a desire to think in new and complex ways, to connect with new people and ideas, and to promote agency in learning—is infusing the work of faculty, students, and staff generally. This will undoubtedly benefit the College in ways that extend beyond the boundaries of the curriculum. The College will need to engage in a systematic and comprehensive evaluation of the *Connections* curriculum that informs future planning with respect to faculty workload and student outcomes.
- The students at Connecticut College are thriving and productive, engaged in positive ways with both the academic program and campus life. It is clear that students are

enjoying their Connecticut College experience and are well-supported by the administration, faculty, and staff.

- The Honor Code is a set of guiding principles that are deeply embedded in the life of the College and promote an environment where safety, civility, and respect are valued. Students are proud of their management of the Honor Council, a body that provides critical leadership opportunities and empowers students to hold one another accountable for their actions.

Concerns

- The College is well aware of the financial challenges it is facing with enrollment declines, the growing need for financial aid, and net tuition remaining flat for the last five years. Like many Colleges that rely heavily on tuition, these financial challenges have manifested in concerns among staff and faculty about the future of the institution. The College will need to remain committed to developing and implementing a multi-year financial sustainability plan that addresses these challenges.
- As part of its financial planning, the College is considering bringing the size of the faculty and staff into alignment with the projected size of the student body. This will require open engagement between the faculty and the administration to ensure that the plan meets future general and major curricular needs. The administration will need to engage in open dialogue with faculty and staff about the impact of these changes, continuing its practice of offering transparency and support in response to community needs and concerns.
- Despite some advances in assessment, there is more work to do. Academic administration and academic departments should continue to work together to complete the five-stage assessment process in the major. As the Classes of 2020 and 2021 move through the new general education curriculum, the College will need to consider gathering institutional-level evidence based on direct measures to assess student learning in the Integrative Pathways and Modes of Inquiry components.
- As the College advances its commitment to inclusion, diversity, and equity, the College will need to follow through on its plan to develop a campus climate survey and to use the data to inform its work on increasing cultural competence for students, faculty, and staff.
- The team encourages the faculty to evaluate the revised faculty meeting schedule to ensure that the arrangement supports the College's healthy tradition of shared governance, given that some legislation will be discussed and brought to vote without the presence of the president.
- The College will need to resolve the status of the master of arts in psychology program, as it plans to do within the next five years, by carefully considering whether the program supports the College's mission and priorities.