

Report to
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students
of

Hamilton College
Clinton, New York

Prepared following review of the institution's
Periodic Review Report

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Introduction

Hamilton College is a first-rate institution of higher education in the liberal arts tradition. It is clearly, and rightfully, proud of its long history of excellence. It is also an institution that is willing to look at itself critically and make adjustments to the way it operates in order to better provide its students, as is stated in the executive summary, "with an excellent environment worthy of their talents and abilities."

The Periodic Review Report prepared and submitted by Hamilton College is a model of clarity and focus. It is thoughtful, concise and well organized. The readers especially appreciate the candor with which the college let its imperfections show. All of the accompanying materials helped the readers form a clear picture of the institution, and its goals and accomplishments.

In all of the materials provided it is clear that there is a strong connection between the accreditation process, the college's strategic planning processes, budgeting, campaign planning, institutional assessment, and constituent governance.

Accomplishments in the last 5 years

The college has navigated several major changes in the five years since its Re-accreditation Review. There have been several significant changes in its administration. The college has welcomed a new president, Joan Hinde Stewart, and will introduce a new Vice President for Academic Affairs this coming year. Other key personnel changes include a new Dean of Admission, and a new Director of Financial Aid.

The college has implemented a new and distinctive curriculum that emphasizes writing and oral communication skills as important tools for liberal learning. To support its emphasis on communication, the college has beefed up its teaching of oral presentation skills by creating the Oral Communication Center and the Multimedia Presentation Center, two new centers that complement the Nesbitt-Johnson Writing Center, the Quantitative Literacy Center, the Peer Tutoring Program, and the Language Learning Center.

The new curriculum has replaced the traditional prescribed menu of required distribution courses with recommended first-year pro-seminars, and required team-taught sophomore seminars, which are the centerpiece of the new general education curriculum. With the aid of a Mellon Foundation grant, Hamilton has been engaged in an in-depth assessment of this new curriculum.

In addition to implementing the new general education experience, the college has also expanded its disciplinary offerings. Two new majors have been created in Communications and Environmental Studies, and a new minor in Japanese has been added.

Partially in response to the Middle States Accreditation review, the college has been engaged in the development and implementation of a new strategic plan. In addition to implementing the curriculum changes already mentioned, the other five goals of the strategic plan include

- Becoming national leaders in offering challenging academic programs, including opportunities for student-faculty collaborations.
- Providing the infrastructure necessary to support the academic program
- Increasing support for employees, particularly with respect to diversity
- Promoting distinctive academic programs
- Assessing student academic performance

The PRR appendixes provide evidence that progress has been made in all of these areas. Two important features of the strategic planning implementation process are the development of an integrated budget and a long-range facilities plan.

Strong progress has been made in the last five years in the recruitment and retention of a diverse student and faculty population. Of particular note is the effective diversification of the faculty: "Approximately 40% of the tenure-track hires in the last five years have been from underrepresented groups, and roughly half were women." This success is attributed to formalized procedures for recruiting a diverse faculty, and to the efforts of individual departments.

The college opened a new \$56 million science center, There have also been a number of renovations, expansions, acquisitions and improvements to the capital assets of the institution, most of which are directly related to improving academic and living conditions for students. In addition, the college has increased its support for faculty scholarship, teaching, faculty development and faculty diversity.

The college has launched an ambitious new capital campaign, the Excelsior Campaign, which is grounded in the themes of the strategic plan. The Campaign was officially launched in December 2004 with a \$175 million goal, but \$80 million had already been raised by the time of the kick-off.

Hamilton's Physical Education department has been going through a number of significant changes. The college has committed to having several of its teams play full schedules in the New England Small College Athletic Conference, and is considering increasing its participation even more. The Physical Education department is carefully weighing the benefits and disadvantages of this more demanding commitment, and is also carefully considering issues of staffing and staff workload, gender equity, facilities management, club finances, the academic success of its athletes, and the relationship between athletics and the rest of the college.

Other important accomplishments include successful efforts to attract more attention and greater visibility to the college and improve support for student access to information through the work of the library, the ITS staff, and often through the combined efforts of both groups. The college has also implemented a number of new policies and practices designed to improve the campus life experience for students, including regenerating the