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Introduction

Springfield Technical Community College’ (STCC’s) self-study co-chairs (Suzanne Smith, Dean of Institutional Research and Analysis and Christina Atwater, faculty member of Business Administration in the School of Liberal and Professional Studies) began their work for the 2021 site visit in May 2019. Initial conversations focused not only on demonstrating the College’s observance of standards for NECHE accreditation with a candid self-study as the product of our efforts, but on also ensuring that the process was based in transparency and inclusiveness at its heart. The co-chairs wanted to ensure that the story of the institution would be told in a thoughtful and meaningful way to represent its historical setting, dedicated faculty, supportive staff and administration, unique student body, and its position in the Greater Springfield community.

The co-chairs spent the summer of 2019 meeting weekly and preparing a project chart that outlined a two-year plan for achieving the goals of product and process. To ensure inclusivity, co-chairs (a faculty member and an administrator for all but Standard 8, where a recent faculty member-turned-administrator was paired with a current administrator) were selected to lead committees that would focus on each of the nine NECHE standards. Although many institutions might choose co-chairs based on their oversight of a particular functional area, STCC used an “internal audit” approach, placing individuals who were the beneficiaries of, or the resources for, individual areas, as the chairperson of that committee (for example, instead of appointing the CFO to be co-chair of Standard 7, with its focus on financial resources, the self-study co-chairs assigned him to co-chair Standard 2, since planning clearly informs the financial decision-making process). The goal was twofold: to ensure an auditing environment, and to help committee members understand their interconnected roles within the organization.

Initial plans to prescribe and “recruit” members for each committee were abandoned in favor of a process by which volunteers could self-select based on their area of interest. This process was in place for the opening session at the College’s September 2019 Professional Day, when the campus was welcomed into the journey of accreditation with a keynote address from Patricia O’Brien, SND, who highlighted the reasons for—and outcomes of—this essential process. During this Professional Day, self-study co-chairs met with Standard Committee co-chairs (SCCCs) to share the schedule for the upcoming academic year. Additionally, SCCC’s were “stationed” at individual tables during lunch so that the campus community could engage with the SCCC’s and discuss the standards for which they were responsible. Campus community members were asked to volunteer for individual Standard Committee participation and to rate their first and second choices. This was done to ensure that a broad selection of constituents would comprise each committee and changes could be made, if necessary. Very few changes (specifically, additions to ensure representation by union membership) were made to these selections. At the end of September, the college had approximately 10 members per committee, rounding out to approximately 100 campus community members directly involved in the process. This has since expanded to far more campus members who participated, providing data, feedback, and support.

To focus on product, a “storied” approach was used to help the Standard Committees engage with the standard and fully understand the nature of its requirements. The self-study co-chairs created questions from each standard and substandard to help guide the process. For example, in
response to Standard 1’s “The institution’s mission and purposes are appropriate to higher education,” a question was developed asking, “How is STCC’s mission appropriate to higher education?” The goal was that these questions would help committee members generate short/bulleted responses that would make the initial research more productive, and ultimately make the writing of the self-study more efficient when the salient data points could be incorporated into a narrative. This approach assisted the process for some standards and proved cumbersome for others. Standard Committee members were asked to focus on description in the first months and then move towards appraisal when the Spring 2020 semester began.

The self-study co-chairs met on a weekly basis together and provided open office hours throughout the Fall 2019 semester. These meetings were an opportunity to discuss questions, assist with obstacles, and to review the project timing. In October 2019, a contingent of 17 individuals attended the NECHE Self-Study Workshop in Stockbridge, including the self-study co-chairs, the SCCCs, and the President of the College. During that workshop, the attendees met in the evening to discuss possible challenges and progress updates. Another update meeting was held in mid-November to share progress reports and report obstacles.

Overall, progress was being made in the Fall semester of 2019 to understand the NECHE standards and relate them to the college’s activities. Standard committees used the Blackboard learning management system to communicate virtually with their team and allow everyone access to post comments. These course shells were open to the campus community and procedures for accessing them were distributed to the entire campus. This enhanced the transparency and inclusivity of the project. It also provided an accessible reference to understand the progress each committee was making in completing their standard. Data First Forms were completed in several iterations during the Fall 2019 and Spring 2020 semester, by the Office of Institutional Research and, in at least one case (Standard 6), the standard committee itself. After attending the NECHE Data First Form training in January 2020, the self-study co-chairs felt that a renewed focus on appraisal would be helpful for each committee. Appraisal questions were prepared for each standard and shared with the committee members. These questions were specific to STCC and the story that would need to be shared to demonstrate the College’s adherence to NECHE standards. Weekly meetings and office hours were continually held through March 2020 and many SCCCs attended these (or other scheduled meetings) to discuss pitfalls, obstacles, and methods to understand what was needed. These months leading to March proved to be very productive.

Before COVID-19 sent the campus community to remote work, the plan was for Standard Committees to complete preliminary projections before the end of Spring 2020 semester. This would allow leadership on campus time to review the committee’s projections during the summer and reinforce the commitment for those projections with financial and strategic decision-making. This would also schedule the report-writing into the summer to become a productive time of product completion. However, upon realizing the broad impact of the pandemic on campus operations, especially on faculty members who had to shift to emergency remote instruction (as well as staff and administrators whose focus was on student support services and college operations), the self-study co-chairs decided to relieve the Standard Committees of the task of developing projections. This decision proved especially beneficial to the process, since the impacts of COVID-19 in the year leading to the site visit would impact the scope of the projections in ways that could not have been anticipated in Spring 2020. During the time leading up to the pandemic, the President of the College communicated and met frequently.
with the self-study co-chairs, ensuring that their leadership of the process kept the self-study at the forefront of campus operations. Self-study discussions were woven into Town Hall meetings for the entire campus community, Professional days, and other meetings with Cabinet members, Trustees, and department chairpersons. The President continued to elevate the importance of the self-study during the COVID-19 outbreak in Spring 2020 and supported the necessary changes to the Projection portion of the self-study.

In summer 2020 a team of three authors (the self-study co-chairs and the Dean of Academic Initiatives) wrote an initial draft of the self-study report, with the understanding that the report would be a living document with many iterations. Each author was responsible for three standards and a cyclical process of authoring, team review, and editing was completed for each standard over a six-week period. This draft was compiled in a Google Drive and released to a group of “First Readers” who were chosen because of their role in leading standard committees and/or compiling the data and content of this first draft. Their role was to check the draft for factual accuracy and to ensure that each committee’s work was accurately represented in the document; feedback provided by these readers was subsequently incorporated into the drafts by the authors of each standard.

September’s Professional Day included a keynote that provided a renewed focus on the self-study project for the 2020-2021 academic year, as well as interactive polling that utilized excerpts from the NECHE standards to remind the campus community of the self-study report content while asking questions that related to each. The day continued with breakout discussions, by standard, to help share and further hone aspects of appraisal. While the self-study co-chairs hoped to release a draft to the campus community in time for the Professional Day, campus leadership felt that there were gaps in the report that would either misrepresent campus issues and/or fail to highlight specific achievements that the campus had accomplished. The President, with the help of the Dean of Academic Initiatives, took two weeks in late September to incorporate some of this information into the report. In October 2020, the campus community and the Board of Trustees received a draft of the self-study report to read, as well as an invitation to provide feedback, in the form of a Qualtrics survey. Additionally, the self-study co-chairpersons met individually with Department Chairpersons and the Board of Trustees to walk through the process of developing and finalizing projections for the report. A college-wide Town Hall was dedicated to the review of the self-study report and included details of the final phase of the project: the adoption of projections.

In November and December 2020, a cross-functional self-study advisory group (consisting of Cabinet members, Deans, faculty, and staff) completed a purposeful review of each standard’s description (with a focus on fact-checking and identifying any blind spots), appraisal (to ensure a candid and honest portrayal of strength and weakness), and projection. The committee developed projections for each standard that incorporated current long-range plans and other specific areas of commitment for improvement. The committee reviewed these in group meetings together and then split into sub-groups to synthesize the projections.

Self-Study co-chairs met with the Board of Trustees to assist in developing projections that would improve their communication on campus, as well as address recent additions to the standards that had been put in place by NECHE which required self-evaluation on a regular basis. Board members, during a November meeting, voted to revisit the specific projections and provide them in January 2021. **This needs to be finalized...**
Institutional Overview

Springfield Technical Community College (STCC) was founded in September 1967 with the mission of providing technical education to the Greater Springfield, Massachusetts community. Its precursor, the Springfield Technical Institute (run by the city of Springfield), was envisioned by founder Edmond P. Garvey as a post-high school institute that would prepare graduates of Springfield’s High School of Trade (now Roger L. Putnam Vocational High School) for gainful employment in technical professions. The College was sited at the Springfield Armory (the country’s first federal armory), which was decommissioned in April 1968 by the US Department of Defense under Secretary Robert McNamara. As former Massachusetts Secretary of Education Matthew Malone noted in his commencement address to the Class of 2014, the Springfield Armory was “a global symbol of American strength and ingenuity, of power and of effort, a place where steel and wood was forged into accurate perfection.” How fitting, he said, that it would go on to house an institution that exemplifies the truth that a “21st century education must be both college and career” whose founders recognized a “bold vision” that “when you blend the best in industrial technical training with the best in the arts and sciences, you get a marketable, competent and highly skilled citizen, one who possesses strong core values, treats the world with respect, and understands the importance of being mission-driven.”

STCC is one of 15 public community colleges in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and the only one with a distinctly technical focus. In its first year, the College offered 6 technology programs and 6 allied health programs, and in quick succession added transfer programs in engineering and sciences (in 1968) and liberal arts (in 1969). Throughout its 53-year history, the College has offered the community a portfolio of academic offerings that are largely technical in nature, with an expanding profile of healthcare programs (employing state-of-the-art patient simulation technology), as well as career-based programs in business, education, criminal justice, and human services; and a strong liberal arts foundation. Today STCC is most accurately described as a comprehensive community college. The philosophy statement noted in the College’s first printed catalog continues to guide the College and inform its mission: “One of the primary responsibilities of a democracy is to provide for the education of the individual citizen to his maximum ability. Because the local community is the center of American life, the community must always have a direct concern for the self-realization of each of its citizens. The accomplishment of this objective is a major concern of the community college. Therefore, to maximize their chances of success, Springfield Technical Community College maintains an open door to all citizens of the community which it serves who indicate any likelihood of academic success at the college level. To further this overall opportunity for self-advancement, the College functions as a cultural center for the community and thus provides a source of enrichment for its citizens and a stimulus for raising their levels of aspiration and accomplishment.” A primary objective of STCC, also noted in its first catalog, was –and continues to be— “to provide high-quality, low-cost education for high school graduates who wish to complete two years of College on a commuting basis.”

As the Greater Springfield community has changed significantly since 1967, the College has similarly changed. Springfield is the third largest city in Massachusetts, with a population of 153,606 people (US Census Bureau, 2019) that is becoming increasingly diverse. While
Springfield is 21% Black and 45% Latinx, the high-school student population in the city is 20% Black and 65% Latinx. In 2015, STCC was designated a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) by the US Department of Education; as of this writing STCC is one of only five Massachusetts community colleges with an HSI designation.

The college’s “two middle names” help us to continually focus on the technical nature of our mission, as well as the community connectedness of our institution. The college enhances that nomenclature with the understanding of the transferability of many of our programs and ultimately the comprehensive nature of the programs on our campus. A strong focus in helping the community understand these defining names, terms, and ultimately our mission has prompted a dedicated marketing plan to ensure that our voice is heard with integrity and transparency, regarding the many offerings and opportunities that our programs provide. Standards 1 and 9 detail these areas and help to inform our forthcoming strategic planning process for the next five years.

Planning and informed decision-making has proliferated on campus to ensure that solid data and connections to outcomes exists at all levels. Standard 2 details the many advancements in planning including in the areas of capital, physical infrastructure, marketing, finances and academics (including a new academic program review process that evaluates the college’s degree and certificate programs to ensure their quality, currency and demand). Significantly, the College’s success in implementing its 2015-20 Student Success Plan (one of five areas of emphasis), is also discussed and appraised in Standard 2.

STCC has undergone many organizational changes (detailed in Standard 3) since the 2015 interim report was completed. In 2016, STCC’s Board of Trustees named John B. Cook, PhD as the sixth president of the college; replacing Ira H. Rubenzahl. Additionally, changes in the Board of Trustees’ leadership occurred in 2019, with the current chairperson, Marikate Murren, replacing outgoing chairperson Christopher Johnson. The College continues to gain footing in an effective shared governance system that has a clear conduit of representation and voice throughout the decision-making process. The All-Unit Congress (or AUC) is the largest body on campus and includes standing committees for academic matters (including curriculum), and matters pertaining to staff, facilities, and safety. Other bodies on campus include chapters of the two employee unions (Massachusetts Community College Council, or MCCC; and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, or AFSCME). Students are represented through The Student Government.

The College marked a significant milestone—its 50th anniversary—in 2017, marked with campus events, a gala, and celebratory comments at Commencement. Throughout the year, the renovation of Building 19 was a highlight of rejuvenation on campus. In December 2018, the Ira H. Rubenzahl Student Learning Commons opened to provide an integrated hub of student services and activities on campus. This unique structure, built in the 19th century, was renovated to include state-of-the-art offices, library, bookstore, and meeting facilities. Its impact to the delivery of student services, as well as continued efforts to simplify the student enrollment process, are described in Standard 5. Details of a Board of Trustees-initiated effort to identify efficiencies and cost-savings through a “value stream mapping” of the College’s enrollment process for new students are also considered in Standard 5.
The historical nature of many of the campus’s buildings was a reliable source of challenge between 2015 through 2020; emergency repairs and utilization issues have plagued the campus and negatively impacted the financial budget. The campus’s designation on the National Register of Historic Places brings with it a special attention to, and scrutiny of, modern updates to historic buildings. STCC, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and the National Park Service jointly manage the physical assets of the historical site as governed by a Memorandum of Understanding, renewed in 2018. To respond to these many needs, the Campus Master Plan was updated in 2017 to articulate a strategic plan for campus facilities and to reshape priorities based on current and projected building conditions (a 2017 report commissioned by the Massachusetts Division of Capital Asset Management estimated campus deferred maintenance costs at over $316 million), as well as academic programming requirements. This plan is described in Standard 2, and the College’s success in implementing the plan (another areas of emphasis requested by the Commission) is detailed in Standard 7.

Academic programming, as detailed in Standard 4, continually shifts to respond to community need and financial resource constraints. Since 2011, new Associate in Science programs have been developed in architecture and building technology, biomedical engineering technology, health information technology and health science. However, in the summer of 2020, 6 degree programs and 7 certificate programs were discontinued due to concerns over sustainability in light of enrollment trends and programmatic costs. These discontinuations were hastened by financial challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic and an uncertain fiscal future, especially regarding the College’s state appropriation for fiscal year 2021. The development of an academic plan in Fall 2020, described in Standard 2, provides a roadmap forward by identifying and prioritizing strategic goals, including addressing equity and inclusion, expanding and strengthening the college’s online program offerings, and revisioning general education, among others. Expedited by COVID-19 and remote operations, the College’s plan for an equitable alternative to placement tests that disproportionately place students of color in developmental courses was implemented in Summer 2020. The English department decided to use high school GPA or a holistically-evaluated writing sample (when a GPA was not available), while the Math department created an internal assessment that students would complete at home. Efforts to strengthen retention and graduation through the development of academic pathways that incorporate successful developmental initiatives, another area of emphasis, are summarized in Standard 8.

The recent implementation of two fully online program offerings in Business Administration have set the stage for more online programming to be launched, pending Commission approval. At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, STCC stood at the ready with many online courses fully developed with best online practices and pedagogy. In Fall 2020, with a renewed focus on accessibility and universal design, instructional designers worked with over 100 faculty to ensure that their online courses offered equitable accessibility to all students, including students for whom English is not their primary language. The Commission identified as an area of emphasis the College’s success in evaluating the effectiveness of its online programs including the assessment of student learning outcomes. Progress in these areas is detailed in Standard 4 and Standard 8. A separate section at the end of this report summarizes evidence of the College’s readiness to be considered by the Commission for general approval for distance education.

Our faculty’s commitment to teaching and learning is highlighted in Standard 6. Our faculty provide unique programs and valuable connections to industry as well as further education. They
continue to focus on creative teaching pedagogy and furthering the use of technology for their students, leveraging labs and other forms of experiential learning to augment the classroom experience. Understanding that community college students often have many competing obligations, including work and family, our faculty are committed to delivering courses in flexible modalities to ensure greater access to students. Efforts to diversify the faculty and staff to more closely mirror the diversity of the student body, another area of emphasis, are addressed in Standard 6 (this is not yet sufficiently addressed in Standard 6). Such efforts include the establishment of employment affinity groups to welcome diverse candidates and increase community belongingness, and the development of the Antiracism and Inclusion Alliance in 2020 to provide a more integrated approach across the college in addressing issues of diversity, equity, inclusion, and antiracism.

The COVID-19 pandemic has, of course, challenged (and changed) the College in a multitude of ways. Significantly, the sudden move to remote learning in March 2020, and the subsequent transition of most all lecture-style classes to online for the summer and Fall 2020 terms, has placed tremendous pressure on our faculty and those who are tasked with preparing faculty for online learning. Fortunately, staff of the recently-created new Center for Online and Digital Learning were well positioned to respond to this challenge, offering “on-demand” training throughout the year to support faculty. Because of these efforts, not a single Spring class was cancelled, and in Fall 2020, 80% of the College’s course sections were taught online (by contrast, only 13% of class sections were taught online in Fall 2019). In Fall 2020, 150 course sections, primarily labs in the health and technical areas, were held on campus, serving just under 900 students. This was possible because of the extensive planning conducted by a campus wide Campus Repopulation Workgroup, a group commissioned by the president in May 2020, and which resulted in a Campus Repopulation Plan. Specific instances of campus responses to the pandemic can be found throughout the self-study report: in Standard 5, details of student service changes that have brought most student service offices to “virtual operation” mode with contingencies in place to ensure they continue to support students; in Standards 3, 4, and 7, discussion of the factors that led to program eliminations, and the repercussions of those decisions; in Standard 6, expansion of online and digital learning professional development; in Standard 7, the College’s effort to respond to technical support needs of students while addressing the “digital divide;” and in Standard 9, efforts to keep the campus community properly informed about the pandemic and the rapidly changing developments associated with it.

STCC continues to closely monitor COVID-19 developments and is in constant contact with local and state public health authorities. The college is also following guidelines issued by the Centers for Disease Control. Through the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security) Act, the college has provided eligible students with grant support to help cover expenses incurred due to campus disruption. The college maintains a Coronavirus webpage that provides resources for students and faculty, as well as campus updates.

With underrepresented students of color our primary focus as we fulfill our mission as a community-serving institution, we seek to elevate the voices of students both within and outside our campus walls. The reinvigoration of the Black Lives Matter movement, following the unjust and untimely death of George Floyd, has injected a new urgency to move forward intentional efforts that address our own equity gaps and measure our success at addressing systemic racism. An email from our Campus Police Chief to the Campus Community in July 2020 addressed the growing resurgence of questions about the ways in which law enforcement has played a part in
the system of racism. The message was clear in that the actions of police officers in Minneapolis were repugnant and that they did not represent the values of STCC police force which include compassion, empathy, and honesty. The email ended with a pledge toward high standards and a supporting mechanism to anti-racist efforts. Equity goals in retention and completion remain a key focus to fulfill our mission: job placement, transfer rates, and increasing our impact in the community bring more accountability and action to these initiatives. Standard 8 details the current measures and successes in these areas and provides room for discussion on improvement and enhancement. Additional focus can be found in Standard 5 related to retention through Supplemental Instruction and the expansion of financial literacy resources for students, as well as new measures being used to determine students’ college readiness when they enter our doors.

The college’s core values are dynamic, and the list begins with our commitments to dedication, integrity, caring, and respect. The list of values then focuses on our place in the community and our efforts at inclusiveness. The point of convergence for these values is our student-centric campus environment where we “support students as they transform their lives.” By ensuring that students remain the focal point of all decision-making, we continue to ensure progress, innovation, and a vibrant campus enriched by its diversity.
Standard One: Mission and Purpose

Description

As an institution of the Massachusetts public higher education system, and one of 15 Governor Foster Furcolo Community Colleges in the Commonwealth, STCC is guided first by the systemwide mission for the community colleges, originally adopted by the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education (BHE) in 1999. That mission statement reads:

The fifteen Community Colleges (also known as the Governor Foster Furcolo Community Colleges) offer open access to high quality, affordable academic programs, including associate degree and certificate programs. They are committed to excellence in teaching and learning and provide academic preparation for transfer to four-year institutions, career preparation for entry into high demand occupational fields, developmental coursework, and lifelong learning opportunities.

Community colleges have a special responsibility for workforce development and through partnerships with business and industry, provide job training, retraining, certification, and skills improvement. In addition, they assume primary responsibility, in the public system, for offering developmental courses, programs, and other educational services for individuals who seek to develop the skills needed to pursue college-level study or enter the workforce.

Rooted in their communities, the colleges serve as community leaders, identifying opportunities and solutions to community problems and contributing to the region’s intellectual, cultural, and economic development. They collaborate with elementary and secondary education and work to ensure a smooth transition from secondary to post-secondary education. Through partnerships with baccalaureate institutions, they help to promote an efficient system of public higher education.

The community colleges offer an environment where the ideas and contributions of all students are respected. Academic and personal support services are provided to ensure that all students have an opportunity to achieve academic and career success. No eligible student shall be deprived of the opportunity for a community college education in Massachusetts because of an inability to pay tuition and fees.

The regular cycle for reviewing STCC’s mission statement has historically taken place during the strategic planning process to ensure its alignment with strategic goals of the institution; it was most recently revised in 2015. In the 2014-15 school year, a 10-member strategic planning steering committee was tasked with designing and overseeing a strategic planning process that would include significant stakeholder participation; and drafting a new strategic plan (STCC 2015-2020 Student Success Plan: A Strategic View) for review by the college community. The committee tasked with the plan sought to develop a mission statement that was short and memorable, and which reflected the themes and phrases they heard in interviews they conducted with students, faculty and staff about student success. The predominant theme was one of support, and the mission statement offered by the committee was “Springfield Technical Community College supports students as they transform their lives.”
The STCC Board of Trustees approved the mission statement embedded in the Student Success Plan on May 18, 2015, and the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education approved it on June 16, 2015. As reported to the BHE, the College’s revised mission statement intentionally removed former mission statement references to technology and instructional innovation because findings from planning activities suggested that the College had a need for improvement in those areas. However, these specific findings pertained to shortcomings in the college’s implementation of technology to address service issues (such as the lack of an electronic transcript ordering process, the lack of an online scheduling system for advisors, or deficiencies in the college’s website) rather than weaknesses in the technical education the College offers.

The mission statement is included in many college publications, including the College letterhead, the President’s annual reports, most print ads, STCC Foundation materials, marketing collateral, and some signage and banners across campus. On marketing materials, including the college website, the mission statement sometimes appears in a truncated form (“Supporting Students. Transforming Lives.”). The mission statement has also appeared in digital ads, as well as on radio advertisements. Some of these examples include the STCC Foundation campaigns, and the President’s Annual Report.

In addition to statements on mission, the college utilizes other statements to help explain their mission, what the college values, and ultimately the vision for the college. A list of Core Values includes

- Dedication: We believe that with pride and determination among our faculty, staff and students we can create a community of truly inspired individuals.
- Integrity: We are committed to fostering an environment that promotes truth and the development of individual character.
- Respect: We nurture mutual respect among faculty, staff and students. With respect, we embrace differences to create an inclusive environment for all.
- Community: As a community within the community at large, we improve lives and strengthen the region through accessible and affordable higher education.
- Student-Centered: We encourage our students to be the best that they can be. We provide a diverse educational experience that promotes personal and professional growth.
- Caring & Commitment: As a community of dedicated faculty and staff who care about student success, we produce graduates who will contribute to the well-being of the region and to the Commonwealth.

The College’s Vision Statement reads: “Springfield Technical Community College will be a dynamic, multicultural learning community where students grow in character, intellect and self-confidence.” Additionally, student success goals can be found in Standard 8.

The unofficial purpose of STCC, as articulated by the Standard One committee, with feedback and input from the President of the college, is to provide a pathway for area residents with a high school diploma or its equivalency to get an affordable postsecondary education. STCC creates opportunities for students who may be unable to afford or may not have been accepted into a four-year institution. Students who choose STCC can pursue associate degrees, certificates or short-term workforce development training that address the needs of regional employers. A
graduate of STCC will have an option to transfer to a four-year institution or enter the workforce and compete for career positions that may be out of reach for candidates without any postsecondary education. The College’s purpose is largely defined by its two middle names: technical and community.

- **Technical:** The College creates opportunities for members of the community to receive high value technical training that is aligned with the workforce and labor needs of the Pioneer Valley. As the only “technical” community college in Massachusetts, STCC offers STEM programs (including an array of health programs) unmatched in the Commonwealth, alongside programming in liberal arts, and transfer options in business, arts and social sciences.

- **Community:** The College, a Hispanic Serving Institution, recognizes the need to close achievement gaps among students who have traditionally faced the most significant barriers to success while improving outcomes for all students. The college seeks to benefit the community it serves by providing opportunities for intellectual, cultural and economic engagement, and preparing students to become thoughtful, committed and socially responsible graduates.

**Appraisal**

STCC remains a unique and essential institution with an extensive offering of programs that speak to the needs of families, communities, and employers. The College continues to be a leader in workforce sectors that include allied health, advanced manufacturing, engineering, and information technology. To meet its mission, however, the College must remain affordable and accessible, while effectively addressing issues of educational quality, equity and systemic racism. In this sense, our mission remains a work in progress. As the College responds to our communities’ need for educational access and affordability, we must continue pushing at barriers that impact retention and graduation rates for our students of color and pulling down walls that limit African American and Latinx student participation in our unique and valuable Health and STEM programs. At the same time, the College is challenged with financial constraints associated with declining enrollments and exacerbated by the spectre of possible funding cuts from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The College’s mission statement, while perhaps capturing a common theme in students’ experiences with the College, does not capture the distinctive nature of our College. While the mission statement may be inspirational, the lack of reference to the technical nature of the College, or its identity as a Hispanic Serving Institution, is problematic, because it does not assist the institution in determining resource allocation decisions. Nor does it allow us to evaluate our progress towards these prioritized areas that we can find defined in this statement.

While some members of the campus community feel that the College’s purposes are obvious and we work towards common goals effectively, others believe the core purposes of the college remain unclear. The absence of an official institutional statement of purposes exacerbates this challenge. Furthermore, in order to measure how or if we are achieving our purposes, we must have published purposes that have been developed collaboratively by the college community against which to measure our effectiveness in fulfilling our mission.
We remain committed, as a college, to providing services to students that assist them in growth and transformation. This includes the many co-curricular activities on campus, the professional development of faculty to respond to online educational needs, the many extra-curricular activities that respond to the needs of our diverse student body, and the educational programs that seek to provide pathways towards career or continued education. Especially during COVID-19, our commitment to our mission is evident; we have responded to the changing needs of our campus community by enhancing online student support communication, virtualizing New Student Orientation, distributing Internet “Hot Spots” and Chromebooks to students who would otherwise be unable to access online classes, and using best practices to deliver online instruction.

In keeping with the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education’s Equity Agenda, STCC is committed to peeling back and studying its practices and policies to ensure they are antiracist. Only through doing this can we thoroughly examine our position and progress on diversity, equity, and inclusion. The Anti-Racism and Inclusion Alliance (AIA) will support true policy reform and move forward with an agenda to address our own equity gap and continue to evaluate and measure our success. The process begins with an equity audit completed by the Equity and Anti-Racism Project Team, which includes Pamela Felder Small, Ph.D. Primary Research Consultant and Primary Contact, Sydney Freeman, Ph.D., Research Consultant, and Tia Brown McNair, Ph.D., Adviser. Results of the audit will be immediately employed to advance the Alliance’s work.

### Projection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Projection Detail</th>
<th>Est. Time of Completion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Planning Committee</td>
<td>During the strategic planning process the College will review the mission, vision, core values and potential statements of success for our students ensuring that we are meeting the State Equity agenda</td>
<td>2022/23 Academic Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College, AIA</td>
<td>The results of the Equity Audit will be utilized by the College, championed by the AIA to examine hiring practices, campus policies, activities, teaching and learning opportunities, etc. to ensure that the campus culture is welcoming to students, faculty and staff of color, and moves towards an antiracist institution</td>
<td>2020 and Ongoing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Standard Two: Planning and Evaluation

In the years since the NEASC 5th year interim report, formal planning at STCC has rapidly expanded, with examples that include an adopted campus master plan, financial forecasting with enrollment projections, the implementation of comprehensive academic program review, an academic plan, and information technology master planning. Planning has also included early efforts to develop a student retention and enrollment management plan, and cost-containment/efficiency efforts that include value stream mapping. Additional planning includes formalization of a marketing plan, and in conjunction with the STCC Foundation, the launch of the first major gifts campaign in a decade. The outcomes of these efforts are discussed in the planning section of this standard.

STCC’s broad-based planning utilizes the results of data analysis and evaluation, as well as internal and external input. Once plans are implemented, outcomes are evaluated to determine the college’s success in carrying out objectives and reaching goals. Assessment is used for continuous improvement and the re-evaluation of efforts or goals resulting from changing internal and external circumstances. The college invests in an infrastructure that supports institutional research through staffing, licensing and data sources, and collaboration with the information technology department. This investment allows for the continuous use of data for decision-making and evaluation. While planning and evaluation are separate activities, STCC is keenly aware of the feedback mechanism between the two: evaluation methods, where possible, are built into planning, and evaluation of existing plans informs future planning.

Description

Planning: In its 5th-Year Interim Report to NEASC in March of 2016, the college reported on the creation and adoption of its strategic plan, STCC 2015-2020 Student Success Plan: A Strategic View (SSP). This plan, created with input from across the College, was approved as the college’s strategic plan by the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education (BHE) in June of 2015, along with a new mission statement, STCC supports students as they transform their lives. The plan’s six broad goals, aligned with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts’ Vision Project, have guided many of the college’s long-term and operational plans and objectives for the past five years. These six goals are as follows:

- **Equity** - Close achievement gaps among students who have traditionally faced the most significant barriers to achievement while improving outcomes for all students.
- **College Readiness & Enrollment** - Increase the proportion of prospective and current students who are academically prepared to succeed in college-level coursework and have them enroll at STCC.
- **Student Learning** - Achieve excellence in the teaching and learning of core competencies, using tools of assessment, to prepare students for success in academic transfer, careers, and lifelong learning.
- **Community Engagement & Citizenship** - Benefit the community that the college serves; provide opportunities for intellectual, cultural, and economic engagement; and prepare students to become thoughtful, committed, and socially responsible graduates.
- **College Completion** - Increase the proportion of students who complete STCC degree and certificate programs.
**Career & Transfer Readiness** - *Increase the proportion of students receiving credentials such that they can successfully enter or return to the workforce, or transfer to a four-year institution.*

To operationalize these goals, an implementation plan was created, prioritizing the top five issues identified within the plan, along with action steps to address each issue. The five issues, shown below, further guided objectives in the coming years:

- Lack of effective communication with students diminishes their ability to succeed.
- Need to decrease race/ethnicity inequity in STCC’s 3-year graduation rates.
- Need for more understanding among new and prospective students about “how college works.”
- Low graduation rate among those students with developmental placements.
- Need to increase the number of students who complete their courses successfully.

The *Student Retention Plan* (2018-2020), developed by the Division of Student Affairs, identified four priorities which are derived directly from the SSP: recruitment, enrollment, persistence, and completion. Objectives designed for the improvement of each priority were included.

Like other community colleges in Massachusetts and across New England and the nation, STCC has experienced declining enrollment since the latest peak in the fall of 2012, when the College enrolled over 7,000 students (by contrast, in Fall 2020, enrollment had dropped to just over 4,300 students, a 38% decrease). Consequently, attention has necessarily been focused on forecasting enrollment, marketing the college and programs, understanding the nature and characteristics of incoming students and the needs for educational and workforce opportunities for various age groups in the region, as well as navigating fiscal difficulties inherent with decreases in revenue to support operations.

In response to these enrollment challenges, the Office of Communications and Marketing created a *Marketing Plan* for the 2019-2020 academic year, which highlights six major goals with a plan of action for each goal. These goals are as follows:

- Increase enrollment through reimagined recruitment strategies tied to specific programs
- Increase enrollment through reimagined recruitment strategies tied to affordability
- Increase enrollment through reimagined recruitment of high school students
- Increase enrollment through reimagined recruitment of adults
- Expand awareness of the STCC value proposition/brand expansion
- Improve intra-campus communication

Although the SSP was approved by the BHE as the college’s strategic plan, the plan was focused solely on student success and did not address facilities or other resources. However, the *Campus Master Plan*, another major planning effort, complements and supports the goals and objectives of the SSP, and broadens the focus to the infrastructure of the campus. Having been last updated in 2014, this plan was revisited upon the arrival of the College’s current president in 2016. During this time, further study of the plan was initiated, in light of changing fiscal and infrastructure circumstances, to include internal input and perspectives. Among these were collection and analysis of classroom utilization and enrollment data; interviews with department
chairpersons to garner input on the current space usage - and future space needs - of their programs and course offerings (in workroom); and a prioritization exercise (via forum and surveys) with faculty and staff, the president’s Cabinet, the Facilities Department, the Board of Trustees (BOT) and the campus community. In addition, the following groups provided external input: Paulien & Associates (which conducted a market analysis and space utilization study), Massachusetts Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM), and Goody Clancy (an architecture, planning, and preservation firm). After feedback was collected and data were analyzed, the following campus priorities were identified:

- Co-locating affiliated programs
- Creating and improving laboratory spaces for programs with nonexistent or outdated ones
- Exploring opportunities to better serve the local labor market through increased online, hybrid, and evening offerings, and certificates of highest employability
- Ensuring occupied facilities are safe, reliable, and put to their highest and best use

More specific objectives identified in the plan included:

- Relocating the programs and offices in Building 20 and planning for the building’s future
- Continuing to co-locate student-serving offices on the north side of the campus
- Affiliating manufacturing-oriented programs

The review of the campus master plan resulted in an Addendum to the Campus Master Plan which was approved by the college’s BOT in May of 2019. The Addendum to the Campus Master Plan identifies long-term needs and establishes plans for the college’s infrastructure, space, and technology, modes of delivery, and program mix. In conjunction with the SSP, the Addendum to the Campus Master Plan has set the priorities for the college’s operational plans. Both plans have served as important guiding tools around which operational and budgetary priorities and plans have been developed and implemented, written according to the priorities and plans outlined in one or both of those overarching documents.

A major infrastructure project that was the result of past planning efforts, the Rubenzahl Student Learning Commons, was completed in 2019. This $50 million renovation, the first major campus infrastructure project in three decades, has organized upwards of 17 student service offices, the library, and approximately 150 staff, into 1 building. The co-location of these offices has positioned the college to more effectively and directly address two of the issues of focus in the Student Success Plan: “Lack of effective communication with students diminishes their ability to succeed,” and the “need for more understanding among new and prospective students about “how college works.” The physical space has facilitated the streamlining of student services, and the coordination of the student onboarding process from application through orientation, financial aid, advising, and registration. In addition to easing students’ onboarding process, it has also provided a place under one roof for students to gather, study, and dine. With the Student Learning Commons project complete, attention was turned to other critical and pressing infrastructure considerations, including a $316 million in deferred maintenance backlog. STCC seeks to plan proactively for deferred facilities and IT maintenance. Sightlines, an entity that helps academic institutions better manage their facilities, performed a study funded by DCAMM in 2017. Sightlines recommended a benchmark for the budgeting of facilities projects. The College will build this into its deferred maintenance plan.
In the early summer of 2020, the vice president of academic affairs/CAO convened a 17-member academic planning committee to outline STCC's overall academic goals and develop short-term (2-3 year) objectives in keeping with the institutional mission. The committee was broad-based, comprised of six faculty members (two from each School), the deans of each school, the assistant dean of STEM, deans of academic initiatives and library, the assistant dean of student initiatives, the senior director of assessment, the AVP of workforce development, an instructional designer, and the CAO. The resulting academic plan continues much of the work of the SSP as it focuses on two overarching priorities: strengthening academic programming, supports and delivery, and addressing equity disparities. The pursuit of excellence in teaching, learning, and application are overriding priorities in the Academic Plan with attention paid to equity, diversity, and inclusion, online programming, Early College, student supports, and program review outcomes and synergies. These priorities are embedded in the 12 areas covered by the plan, with each area delineating goals, subtasks, and action items:

- Improving Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
- Prior Learning Assessment
- Early College Partnerships and Initiatives
- Library Services
- Online Courses/Programs
- Student Support and Advising
- Faculty Development
- First-year Pathways
- General Education and Civic Learning
- Noncredit pathways
- College Readiness
- Online Instruction

STCC’s Comprehensive Emergency Response Plan (CEMP), finalized in July 2018, presents plans for hazards and emergencies following best practices in risk assessment. The CEMP is administered by the President’s Emergency Operations Manager designee, who has been the vice president of administration/CFO, with significant contributions from the College’s chief of police. An Emergency Response Team, with representatives from faculty, staff, and administration, is tasked with implementing the CEMP and responding to emergencies as needed. Past examples have included campus power outages, weather-related emergencies, and campus facilities emergencies. With the effects of COVID-19 now altering emergency preparedness and response, the STCC President appointed a Campus Repopulation Work Group to more intentionally focus on COVID-19 planning, protocols, and safety measures needed for the college to operate safely. This body was announced May 19, 2020 and has met up to twice weekly over the summer and through fall 2020. STCC “went remote” the week of Spring Break (March 2020) and has operated predominately off-campus and virtually since that time.

The College’s Information Technology Master Plan FY 2019 - 2023 was developed by the CIO/assistant vice president of information technology. Like the Academic Plan, this plan is aligned with and supportive of the mission of the college. It addresses the needs and priorities of Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Administrative Services, Workforce Development, Facilities, and the goals outlined in the Addendum to the Campus Master Plan. The plan provides a blueprint for leveraging reliable and emerging technologies and information resources, highlights important IT trends in higher education, presents a strategic analysis of current IT operations, and identifies key challenges and opportunities. This master plan will continue to guide the creation of the more granular operational plans of the IT department on an annual basis.

The College’s budget process is systematic and ties the plans of major units together while supporting the priorities identified in the SSP and Master Plan. As an essential component of the
college’s management control systems, it provides a structure for planning, coordination, and control. An effective budget is typically realistic (well-reasoned, reflecting current market conditions), reflective of short- and long-term strategic goals, and flexible enough to address revenue shortfalls and unexpected expenses.

The college employs an incremental budgeting approach. The upcoming fiscal year’s budget is first drafted in the context of the current fiscal year’s budget and revenue and spending actuals, with adjustments based on facts and assumptions that include anticipated enrollment, expected state support, and collectively bargained increases in salary. Sources of funds (revenues) for FY20 were based on two major components: state appropriations (approximately 52% of budget), student tuition and fees (approximately 44% of budget). The other 4% is comprised of other trust funds, STCC Foundation support, and reserves. State appropriations, which are determined by the legislative process, are somewhat uncertain from year-to-year, but estimating student enrollment and the resulting tuition and fee revenues for the upcoming academic year is the most challenging component in predicting revenue. For example, in FY2020, for every 1% fluctuation in the enrollment projection, the net revenue effect was approximately $241,000, based on the fee structure in place at that time. Because of these two uncertainties, when developing the budget, the college is very conservative in its assumptions. The benefit of this approach is that it allows the college the flexibility to address revenue shortfalls and any unanticipated expenses that may arise during the fiscal year.

The annual budget preparation allows all segments of the college to address financial needs and priorities based on the plans for their areas. Each year, college administrators begin preliminary budget conversations in February with the BOT for the subsequent fiscal year. Typically, the Vice President of Administration/CFO and Vice President of Academic Affairs/CAO along with members of the budget team meet with all budget managers, including school deans, who submit budget requests from their departments. Each budget manager is invited to review his/her department’s/office’s 5-year spending history. The Vice President of Administration/CFO also works with the Dean of Institutional Research and Analysis to create an enrollment projection based on multiple factors including headcounts, retention trends, credits per student, and demographic trends, using a model now in existence for five years. Enrollment projections are based on the best knowledge of trends and history and are neither overly conservative nor overly ambitious. Aiding the budget development process is the software package BudgetPak, which includes a planning tool (ActionPak) that allows budget managers to request additional funding for equipment and other prioritized needs. This makes management aware of the current and future needs of the departments. Although requests far outweigh the ability for the college to supply funding each year, needs are reviewed throughout the fiscal year if funds become available. There are also monthly reporting and forecasting tools available in Budget Pak, and users can review and evaluate historical spending trends.

The BOT, given its fiduciary responsibility, approves final college budgets. Administrators present to the BOT draft college budgets with draft assumptions at multiple monthly meetings, often seeking final approval in May, but allowing for a June meeting should the need arise (this was the case when the FY 2021 budget was being considered). Throughout the fiscal year, cash flow projections (presented monthly at BOT meetings) are updated regularly based on changes in enrollment projections, new or expired grants, changes in salary/wage projections and any necessary emergency purchases. An Investment Sub-Committee of the BOT’s Ways & Means Committee meets quarterly to examine investments and reserves/unrestricted net funds.
In the recent past, college administrators have, on occasion, made requests to the BOT for budget revisions, such as when a piece of critical infrastructure has failed and needed replacement without delay. This occurred in the summer of 2018, when an IT network “core switch” failed and required replacement at a cost of over $400,000. The BOT approved the use of reserves to purchase a replacement, and the budget was adjusted accordingly. Other strategies to cover unanticipated costs have included keeping unfilled positions open to reduce operating expenses, and using revenue that exceeds the budget, if available.

With changes in leadership at the college in the last five years, and a priority placed on data-informed decision-making, the need for, use of, and education around data has increased dramatically. The College’s Office of Institutional Research (OIR) supports high-level planning by providing data and analysis for strategic planning and accreditation, program-level accreditation, the program review system, grant proposals and annual performance reviews for major grants, and annual operational plans and initiatives. Since the last comprehensive evaluation, and as described in the 5th year interim report, OIR has continued to invest in personnel skilled at research, and in software such as SPSS, Tableau, and Qualtrics for collection and analysis of survey data. The college has also invested in the continual updating and maintenance of the Institutional Research Data Mart (IRDM) and the creation of automated dashboards to support the college with analysis for decision-making and strategy. In addition to the tools, staffing, and skills, OIR and the IT department have built a strong working relationship.

The IRDM was created 11 years ago to store “snapshot” census data, which enables OIR staff to track enrollment and retention over time and to conduct longitudinal studies of student progress. These include tracking students through development coursework and subsequent course-taking, measuring the effect of changes to pre-requisites and co-requisites, analyzing course completion rates by race, ethnicity and gender, and student outcomes such as graduation rates, transfer information, and subsequent employment. Along with other customized datasets, this database stores data that have been cleaned and validated before submission to the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE), and IPEDS. While there has been an increase in reporting requirements to state, federal and grant-making agencies, there is also a tangible benefit to the college in the collection of this data, since OIR retains and leverages those data to track and evaluate some of the metrics in the SSP and other academic and student affairs initiatives.

In addition to tracking student success metrics and outcomes, OIR has expanded its role in supporting enrollment management planning by producing enrollment projections and tracking registrations and enrollment throughout the registration cycle. The current tracking system now includes dashboards showing year over year daily registration headcount and credits at the college and program levels, weekly admissions funnel flows by program, and daily course fill rates. In addition, weekly analyses of new students by high school and other dimensions have been ramped up, informing admissions and marketing departments of progress on hitting targets and providing feedback on whether recent efforts to increase enrollment have borne fruit. Similarly, tracking of returning students’ registration activity has helped the advising area understand how their outreach to returning students improved retention.

While many of the reporting requirements to the state have grown, state-level priorities are aligned with college priorities. This is particularly true regarding the prioritization of the Equity
Agenda, a new comprehensive plan to address racial equity. This initiative, announced by the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education in September of 2020, includes concrete outcome goals and such imperatives as equity audits of state and college-level policies and practices. As such, it is in alignment with the work outlined in the College’s Academic Plan, as well as the Anti-Racism and Inclusion Alliance established at the College in 2020. Equity is also a major focus of the DHE’s newly-developed Performance Measurement Reporting System (PMRS).

Related to that measurement system, the DHE has also invested considerable resources in its adoption and use of Tableau software at the central office to create performance dashboards and to allow community and state colleges across the system to share knowledge, tools, tips, dashboards, a server, and data across the system. Because of this, the potential for collaboration and benchmarking has increased exponentially, and members of the OIR have signed on to training in that use. In addition, the dean of IR serves on the DHE’s Tableau Accelerated Adoption Steering Committee, and previously served on the PMRS steering committee and Student Success Working group as it worked to define performance metrics for the community college system. As a whole, the OIR team has contributed to proofing, editing, and finalizing the PMRS, a good faith collaboration that benefits all constituents through shared understandings of definitions, metrics, and tools.

An additional and relatively new initiative of the OIR is the participation in the American Association of Community Colleges’ Voluntary Framework of Accountability (VFA), a national system of accountability built specifically for community colleges. As a former Achieving the Dream (ATD) college, STCC had already dedicated considerable resources to data reporting and analysis related to equity. As an additional effort to align with the DHE’s use of VFA metrics, the college has moved to that system, which was informed by lessons from the ATD model.

Évaluation: Space utilization on campus is inextricably tied to the mix of programs, their modes of delivery and equipment needs, and any plans for future expansion and adaptation in light of external market factors. Examination of program quality, needs, and future space plans has been made possible with the development of a new system for academic program review (APR), introduced in the 2018/19 academic year. This system is focused primarily on programs in the Liberal Arts and Professional Studies and STEM schools, which, unlike most programs in the School of Health and Patient Simulation, are not accredited by outside bodies. APR places programs on a five-year cycle of review and is meant to inform space, budgetary, technological, and academic planning. To date, 47 programs have undergone the new system of program review, with 19 programs and certificates reviewed in 2018-2019, an additional 28 programs in 2019-2020, and 15 currently in review in 2020-2021.

The new system of program review is led by department chairs or curriculum coordinators in consultation with other faculty. To facilitate the reviews, the Office of Assessment works with departments on a review of their mission and student learning outcomes. OIR provides data and analysis on the following: applications, acceptances, and enrollment in programs, enrollment trends; cohort-based retention and completions rates; numbers of credits generated by course and program; percentage of new students with developmental placements; labor market demand analyses, job outlooks, and enrollment and completion in similar programs at other institutions in the region to determine the need for new programs and any competition for students. For market analysis, OIR uses data obtained from the National Center for Education and Statistics IPEDS Completions database, the Bureau of Labor Statistics Job Outlook reports, and the Massachusetts
Department of Labor local outlooks. OIR also obtains and provides data on the transfer of students to four-year colleges from the National Student Clearinghouse, and job placement data obtained from the annual Perkins Employment Survey, which is sent to completers one year after graduation. In line with the goals of the SSP, and to shed light on progress in closing equity gaps, all data is disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, and age or Pell status when possible.

After examining this information, along with the mission of the department or program, resources, and other aspects of the program review, department chairs propose recommendations for enhancements, modifications, and other changes. The program review process culminates with reports and a spring presentation to the campus, in which findings and next steps are shared.

Examples of academic program changes or implementations resulting from APR include:

- Development of an Internet of Things certificate program.
- Restructuring and streamlining of the Business Department’s six program options to two.
- The development of a Child Development Associate Certificate in response to changes in early childhood educator credentialing.
- Changes to the General Studies curriculum to better align with MassTransfer requirements, and to ensure maximum flexibility for students in this program.

**Value Stream Mapping** is a cost-containment/efficiency evaluation effort led by a cross-functional team, convened by the president in response to a BOT initiative to identify cost savings. In the 2019-2020 academic year, this team followed a cohort of 20 students to learn more about the process of becoming a student, focusing attention on the onboarding process for new students as they navigate through admissions, financial aid, advising, testing, and registration. As bumps in this process and inefficiencies are uncovered, solutions are created and implemented to ease the process and streamline resources. Utilizing historical data provided by OIR on yield rates at each stage of the onboarding and enrollment process, the committee will better understand, at each stage of enrollment, where potential students are lost in the process, where inequities in the process result in additional barriers, and where to focus attention to remove stumbling blocks. These yield rates can then be used to measure whether improvements have been made, and with continuous improvement, increase future enrollment and retention.

Information on student engagement and satisfaction is regularly gathered via the **Community College Student Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE)**, designed to assess institutional practices and student behaviors that are highly correlated with student learning and student retention. The survey is administered every three years (the planned spring 2020 administration was postponed to 2021 due to COVID-19 developments). Feedback is also gathered via the **Graduate Student Survey**, which is administered each year at cap and gown pick up. This survey includes questions on employment status and plans, continuing education plans, perceived educational preparation, perceived educational barriers, and perceived educational supports. Students are also asked how long it took to complete their credentials (associates vs certificates), and to identify their academic program. The results are analyzed and posted on the OIR webpage. While this survey typically has a high response rate (e.g., 94% in 2019), the 2020 administration—sent electronically to graduates due to COVID-19 and the subsequent cancellation of traditional commencement exercises—had an uncharacteristically low response rate of 28%. The employment status of graduates is collected annually through the Perkins Employment Survey sent by OIR to all graduates approximately 10-12 months after graduation. This survey is completed to meet the requirements of the college’s Perkins grant with the timing
dictated by the conditions of the grant.

Transfer information is gathered twice per year from the National Student Clearinghouse to identify which students (completers and non-completers alike) went on to study at four-year institutions (and, as of 2019-2020, the college has access to additional data showing the students’ major program of study at the transfer institution). Additionally, the University of Massachusetts at Amherst provides all Massachusetts community colleges with a yearly report on transfers to UMass from such institutions and their aggregate performance during the first year.

The College’s large, multi-year federal grants such as HSI-STEM, Title III, and TRIO are also results of planning. They include evaluation plans, and often a data analyst, built into the grant design. To coordinate with other data coming out of IR and to ensure that data definitions and standards were consistent, an informal Data Analysis Working Group was formed to bridge the macro level of IR work with the microanalysis done for these grants. The college’s two largest grants report metrics each year that align with those in the SSP, but for more day-to-day operational and continuous improvement assessment, data analysts on these grants collect and report data related to their activities, inputs, and short-term outcomes so that program coordinators can make adjustments mid-stream. An example of this continuous improvement can be seen in the ongoing development of the Title III Supplemental Instruction program. Data collection at the local level (tracking attendance at SI sessions by race/ethnicity and intervening in real-time when disparities are noted, for example), allows for problem solving as needed, as opposed to a summative, macro-level retrospective analysis after the opportunity for intervention has passed.

This approach is a model for evaluation that is also practiced in Student Affairs. Registration data is monitored in real-time to assist students and remove barriers to registration (such as holds on accounts or deregistration for non-payment) for the next term, thus improving retention. The Value Stream Mapping project provides insight for improvement of new student services, as the tracking of student progress in the onboarding process by student affairs professionals supports new students, many of whom are first-generation. Monitoring the ongoing enrollment of new students by high school and city allows admissions staff to focus attention on areas of potential increases in enrollment.

Appraisal

Planning: The College’s SSP has guided the priorities of the college for the last five years, and the Campus Master Plan has guided the facilities planning. Progress on college-level student success outcomes is reported annually in the President’s Annual Report and the Annual Performance Reviews of the major federal grants. Yet it is unclear the extent to which the constituents involved in implementing the plan are aware of these macro-level outcomes or review them annually to make adjustments to their work on these issues. The forums for discussion and communication have been lacking in the past 2 or 3 years as attention has turned to enrollment pressures. The results of the governance survey referenced in Standard 3 indicate room for improvement in college stakeholders’ engagement with the SSP. Indeed, the college would benefit from a mechanism for regular engagement built into the next strategic plan, along with a regular and ongoing review of activities and outcomes to inform mid-course adjustments, document and communicate progress, and be accountable to the longer-range plan. As the COVID-19 crisis and enrollment pressures on the budget have shown, staff shortages and limited
resources can divert attention to short-term internal and external crises. Simply put, a regular mechanism for review could help keep the college on track.

Despite the challenges related to communication of strategic plan outcomes, the most recent public health crisis and the college’s adaptation to the extraordinary challenges it presented are illustrative of how long-term planning allowed the college to quickly transition to remote instruction and remote operations. Hundreds of sections and countless offices and support services moved to remote operations in a matter of weeks. Communication during that time, as evidenced by emails and the COVID webpage, has been consistent and extensive. The planning required to make this adjustment drew upon resources that had been introduced in most recent years as a result of planning: a new CIO/assistant vice president position in 2018, three instructional designers, and a full-time webmaster. Organizational changes, such as the creation of a School of STEM, for example, affected senior administration’s ability to organize, respond, and communicate with faculty in 2020 spring as instruction was moved to remote delivery.

The institution’s financial resources are dedicated to the operations of the college, with a strong emphasis on academic and student support programs. The college has very little short-term debt or any other financial obligation that would impede the college from dediacting its financial resources to its operational needs. The one element of debt the College carries (approximately $240K/year) is for the replacement of a boiler in Building 17. At no time in the past five years has STCC had a final audited financial statement with a net negative position.

**Evaluation:** The College’s shift to a culture of data-informed decision-making has increased ad hoc requests to OIR for data and analysis. This is a “good problem” to have as it points to a culture shift in the use of data, but the related challenge and growing pains involve the relative balance of responding to “just in time” needs for data versus focusing on automation and synergies that could turn repeated requests into regular reports. This kind of shift would support systematic, regular, and ongoing use of data.

While goals and foundational resources are in place, some of the challenges with the ability of OIR to inform planning and evaluation have included insufficient resources in IT, where a loss of personnel/institutional memory has resulted in challenges related to data integrity and data governance. It has been difficult at times to fill IT positions on the programming side due to higher wages in the private sector and the legacy nature of the Student Information System (Ellucian’s *Colleague*). Lack of resources also means personnel are pulled away to attend to crises instead of working on longer-term projects. The loss of IT programming personnel has meant losing institutional memory of *Colleague* and some of the STCC-specific “fixes” and customizations that have been created over time, with no consistent tracking of fixes and customizations. Thus, time and resources are needed to reverse-engineer these customizations. Questions and issues of data integrity pull OIR staff time and resources into data cleaning, coding, and sleuthing, which reduces the ability to invest more time running analyses for planning. Data integrity is a foundation of solid, well-run analysis, and despite the existence of a well-represented Data Governance Committee, its ad hoc nature contributes to the ongoing challenges of data integrity.

Academic program review, now in its third year, serves as a forum for faculty voice and leadership. Data provided to chairs and coordinators as well as faculty allows for a deep understanding of program enrollment, retention, and demographic trends (discussed further in
standard eight), that had not been available at the program level before. Going forward, STCC will continue to grow and mature the Academic Program Review process. In order to satisfy the college’s mission, it must continue to evaluate the quality of its programs and measure the efficacy of their contributions to the transformation of the lives of its students.

Implementation of Student Success Plan: One signature accomplishment in the implementation of the SSP was the development of the Health Science AS program. This effort involved many of the goals of the SSP and served as a focal point for pulling many of the objectives together in one project. Data were analyzed and it was recognized that students who sought entrance to a health program but were not accepted due to lack of preparation or the competitiveness of the applicant pool, were often set adrift in a general studies program with little structure. Many students in the program had prerequisites or developmental work they needed to take, and there were a disproportionate number of students of color, especially compared to their underrepresentation in the competitive health programs. It was recognized that students needed different pathways to potential health careers, as well as stackable credentials so that students could begin working in the field earlier on their path to a degree or certificate (more detail about this program is offered in Standard 4).

Both Title III and the HSI-STEM grants took up many of the objectives of the SSP in their activities. The HSI-STEM grant was written to increase Hispanic and low-income representation in STEM, and the Title III grant addressed the need for pedagogical training around cultural competency to improve teaching and learning in order, ultimately, to help students of color succeed in college and beyond. Student outcomes charted in the President’s Annual Report and the STCC Factbook show the following improvements thus far:

- An increase in graduation rates for students of color over the past five years (2013 to 2017 cohorts) from 13% to 17% for black students and 11% to 15% for Latinx students;
- an increase in the percentage of STEM grads who identify as students of color, from 20% to 25% between 2014 and 2018;
- an increase in graduation rates for students placing into developmental work, from 14.8% to 18.4% between 2014 and 2018;
- an increase in course pass rates for students of color between 2014 and 2017, from 70% to 77% of courses for black students and 68% to 76% of courses for Latinx students;
- an increase in participation in online learning between 2014 and 2018, from 16% to 25% for black students and from 17 to 25% for Latinx students.

Despite these improvements, gaps persist between students of color and students who identify as white in each of these other metrics, and there have been little to no gains in fall-to-fall retention rates for students of color from 2014 to 2018. Still, evaluation of the Supplemental Instruction program, explicated in more detail in standard five, showed positive results in improving pass rates and retention rates for students of color who participated versus those who did not, and expanding access to such services will become one of the elements of the next strategic plan.

**Projection**

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<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Projection Detail</th>
<th>Est. Time of Completion</th>
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25
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<tr>
<th>STCC</th>
<th>The college will formalize the process that leads STCC to a new Strategic Plan. The next STCC Strategic Plan will integrate academic, infrastructure, and student success needs and goals.</th>
<th>Commence spring 21, complete by Summer 2022</th>
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<tr>
<td>STCC</td>
<td>To address the need for a broad-based forum for the evaluation of the next strategic plan, and the apparent low level of engagement with the plan, STCC will work through existing shared governance bodies in both the planning and evaluation process. The administration will work with the All-Unit Congress, Student Government, and our two collective bargaining units (MCCC and AFSCME) on developing the priorities, and the BOT for the funding sources for these priorities. Shared governance will also have input as to the evaluation of how well the college adhered to its plans.</td>
<td>Commence Fall 2021, and ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STCC</td>
<td>A deferred maintenance plan will be developed (by whom/when). The plan will include goals and benchmarks from the Sightlines plan and will be integrated into the institution’s multi-year budget. The college intends to proactively plan and budget for IT preventative maintenance.</td>
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Standard Three: Organization and Governance

Description

Governing Board: Because STCC is a public institution, the authority and structure of its governance is largely determined by Massachusetts General Laws (MGL). In MGL Part I, Title II, Chapter 15A, Section 22, the powers and duties of the community college boards of trustees (BOTs) are enumerated (in Massachusetts, there are 15 public community colleges, and each institution has its own BOT). All but one member (the Student Trustee) of the 11-member volunteer BOT is appointed by the Governor of the Commonwealth (and the Chair of the BOT is determined by the Governor). The board has a fiduciary duty to the institution, exercises fiscal autonomy, and enjoys authority over matters of governance, personnel, finances, and academics. Importantly, the BOT has authority to delegate to the President (the Chief Executive Officer) any of the powers and responsibilities enumerated in MGL. For example, on January 26, 2015, the BOT approved a motion to delegate personnel authority to the former President, with the provision that the President “report on any appointment with a description on qualifications and background of the individual.” On March 18, 2016, in preparation for the former President’s retirement, the BOT amended the original motion to replace the name of the former President with, simply, “President.” Such delegation authority enables the BOT to govern, while empowering the President to manage the day-to-day affairs of the College.

The STCC BOT governs under bylaws first adopted in May, 1981 (and last amended in March, 2013). The bylaws, publicly available on the College’s website, delineate the selection and responsibilities of the BOT officers, specify logistics for meetings, describe the committees of the BOT (including two standing committees, on Internal and External Relations and Ways and Means), and prescribe the rules under which BOT business must be conducted.

Composition of the STCC BOT reflects broad representation from local industry, including health care, manufacturing, entertainment, banking, insurance, automotive repair and workforce education. Three of the BOT’s members are small business owners in industries for which STCC prepares workers. No member of the BOT has a personal financial interest in the College; nor is any member related to any senior administrator, staff or faculty. BOT members are expressly forbidden from receiving compensation for their Board services.

The Massachusetts Board of Higher Education (BHE) maintains a website of Trustee Resources, including guidance on board operation, presidential searches and evaluation, strategic planning, and other matters related to governance (e.g., board self-assessment tools are provided). New members of the BOT are provided orientation materials, including an open meeting law guide (in workroom), as well as required training materials that includes the “State Ethics Commission’s Conflict of Interest Law Online Training” program, which must be completed within 30 days of appointment (in workroom). They are also invited to participate in a New Trustee Orientation and Training session run twice a year by the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE). Additionally, the BHE hosts an annual Trustees Conference to provide trustees a forum to examine and discuss topics such as enrollment trends, equity concerns, the state budget process, and campus climate issues, to name a few. In addition, BOT members attend training workshops and have available to them online workshops to provide further training.
In October 2020, in response to recently passed legislation, the BHE established minimum trainings expectations and requirements for Trustees. The training program, developed by the BHE in consultation with the Office of the Attorney General and Office of the Inspector General, will cover at minimum the areas of Open Meeting law, public records law, conflict of interest law, state procurement laws, state finance provisions under chapter 29, fraud prevention, and fiduciary responsibilities. All members of a board of a public higher education institution must complete the BHE instruction and training program at least once every 4 years, and board of trustee membership shall terminate, and the member’s seat shall be deemed vacant, if the member fails to complete the training program within the BHE’s established schedule. As of January 2021, 4 of the 11-member BOT had completed portions of this new training program.

The BOT members abide by their bylaws, and take signed oaths to discharge their duties “to the rules and regulations of the Constitution, and the laws of this [Massachusetts] Commonwealth.” (Trustee Oath, in workroom) Trustees recognize they have a fiduciary responsibility to students and faculty, as well as a fiscal responsibility to the BHE. Two of the BOT’s current members are STCC alumni with personal knowledge of the College.

All BOT meetings and subcommittee meetings adhere to open meetings laws, and the public is invited to attend (since the COVID-19 pandemic precluded in-person meetings, BOT meetings have been held virtually, first by telephone conference call and now via videoconferencing). Meeting minutes are recorded and published on the College website. BOT meetings are scheduled in advance (an annual meeting schedule for the upcoming academic year is typically published in May), advertised to the campus community, and posted on the College website, alongside meeting agenda (which are published at least two business days prior to each meeting). The full Board meets monthly (except, typically, in July and August), the Ways and Means subcommittee meets monthly, and the Internal/External Affairs subcommittee meets every other month. The former committee is charged with the fiscal oversight of the college, including reviewing and making recommendations for student fee increases, the college's spending plan and budget, and capital projects. In addition, the committee oversees the Investment Subcommittee and has the authority to approve financial statements and annual financial audits. While the charge of the Internal/External Affairs subcommittee is not prescribed in the BOT bylaws, the BOT Chair indicates that its charge is to create and foster a cross-collaborative environment with internal and external constituents with the common goal of enhancing the STCC success. The committee focuses on programmatic and personnel considerations, including tenure recommendations. At its subcommittee meetings, the BOT receives regular reports from the vice presidents or assistant vice presidents for academic affairs, advancement and external affairs, administrative services, human resources, information technology and student affairs. At the BOT’s annual 1-day retreat in September, Board members participate in training and professional development on a variety of topics of relevance to them and the College, including goals the BHE has established for higher education in Massachusetts.

The President maintains regular communication with the BOT and makes members aware of any significant difficulties or opportunities that may be on the horizon (for example, potential program closures, physical facility challenges, or opportunities to lobby legislators for increased funding for the College). Communication to the BOT is done through presentations and extensive “handouts” at BOT meetings, emails to trustees, and phone calls.
Although the BOT delegates significant management authority to the President, wide-ranging institutional policies and initiatives are reviewed and approved by the BOT. Examples of actions requiring BOT approval include (but are not limited to): formal approval of annual operating budget; setting of student fee schedule; sabbatical requests and tenure recommendations; creation of new academic degree programs; endorsement of college plans (including strategic, capital, financial and academic plans); investment actions; naming of campus buildings; and appointments to the STCC Assistance Corporation Board of Directors. When receiving updates from the President, the BOT often asks for rationales and sometimes requests additional information. In response to the summer 2020 decision of the president to close several academic programs, the BOT formulated an ad-hoc committee to study the reasons for the program closures to determine if the decisions should be revisited. Some campus initiatives are directed at the behest of the BOT. For example, in response to a conversation about anticipated budget challenges, the BOT requested a value stream assessment be made of some of the College’s operations to identify potential areas for cost-savings. That assessment began in fall 2019 and concluded in spring 2020, resulting in a report on recommendations and next steps. Also, the BOT advises the president on changes to the college’s administrative structure and oversees and monitors the institution’s progress toward goals the BOT has set forth (an example or two are needed here).

Other ways in which the BOT maintains channels of communication with the campus community include invitations to the All Unit Congress to present information to the BOT at its Internal/External subcommittee meetings, engaging with STCCPA leaders to hear the concerns and perspective of the MCCC membership (in particular, regarding the 2020 academic program closures), and noting in BOT meetings any communications sent to the BOT by campus governance units.

A key responsibility of the BOT is its oversight and annual review of the President’s performance. This process is determined by guidelines (in workroom) provided to Trustees by the BHE. These guidelines require an annual review in two areas of presidential responsibility:

- Attainment of or progress towards achieving annual institutional goals and objectives, established by the local board of trustees, which include the following considerations:
  - Evaluation of institutional mission, goals and objectives, including the institution’s strategic plan
  - Interrelation of institutional goals with system-level goals, provided annually to the BOT by the Commissioner of Higher Education
  - Institutional leadership and management skills
  - Personal attributes, including trust and integrity
  - Fundraising
  - Internal relationships/campus climate
  - External relationships/leadership in the community

- Participation in the BHE system-level goals and activities, the evaluation of which will consider and include institutional data linked to system-level goals and metrics

The evaluation must clearly state the process by which the BOT conducted the review, such as whether self-assessments, campus surveys or third party interviews were conducted, what documents or data were reviewed, and whether a committee process was used. The BOT is expected to discuss the evaluation with the president before it is submitted to the Commissioner.
of Higher Education, and all evaluations must be conducted in accordance with Massachusetts Open Meeting Law requirements.

In addition to the annual review, the BOT must conduct a more comprehensive review no less than three years from appointment of new Presidents, and no less than every five years thereafter, although more frequent comprehensive reviews may be conducted if a Board wishes to do so. The scope of a comprehensive review is intended to focus more on the President’s ability to lead going forward, rather than focusing exclusively on achieving past objectives, and is intended to allow for broader input from people who come in contact with and are in a position to comment on the President’s performance.

**Internal Governance:** With the support of the BOT, the President maintains an administrative structure to support the college’s purpose and objectives. The College is organized into six distinct units, each led by a Vice President or Assistant Vice President. The units include Academic Affairs, Administrative Services, Advancement and External Affairs, Human Resources, Information Technology and Student Affairs. The President’s senior leadership team, his Cabinet, meets weekly as a group, and includes four Vice Presidents (of Academic Affairs, Administration, Advancement and External Affairs, and Student Affairs). Also included in the Cabinet are three Assistant Vice Presidents (of Human Services, Information Technology, and Workforce Development), two of whom report directly to the President. The President and his Cabinet manage and allocate resources in line with the strategic direction of the institution, and monitor outcomes which indicate the effectiveness of the institution and inform improvement processes.

The Vice President of Academic Affairs is the chief academic officer (CAO). She reports directly to the President and meets with him frequently beyond the regularly scheduled weekly meetings to discuss all matters pertinent to academic affairs which include personnel, facility issues that impact academic programs, curriculum (program review), budget, planning and academic strategy. The CAO also has standing meetings with the other members of the Cabinet, as well as the Director of Marketing and Communications and the Senior Director of Facilities.

The CAO, along with her academic leadership team, is responsible for advancing the academic mission of the college, and ensuring quality in all academic programming, including noncredit offerings and workforce development. This team (which meets biweekly as a group) includes the Assistant Vice President of Workforce Development, the Dean and Assistant Dean of each of the three academic schools (*Health and Patient Simulation, Liberal and Professional Studies, and Science, Technology, Engineering and Math*), as well as Deans of Academic Initiatives, Institutional Research and Analysis, and Library. Additionally, the team includes the Senior Director of Assessment. The CAO has standing bi-weekly individual meetings with the Assistant Vice President and Deans on her leadership team. Additionally, the CAO works closely with department chairs, particularly in those departments that are undergoing program review and/or who have urgent curricular, equipment or facility needs. To see to departmental needs, the CAO works directly with professionals in the Grants Office (who report to Academic Affairs) to determine funding opportunities.

The Dean of each Academic School oversees and evaluates (with the assistance of the Assistant Dean) the faculty and staff in those schools (currently the *Liberal and Professional Studies* Assistant Dean position is vacant). Every academic department that comprises each school is led
by a Department Chair, who is a member of the faculty. Some Department Chairs oversee service departments (for example, Mathematics) that offer courses but not programs, while others oversee departments (for example, Computer Technologies) that offer both courses and programs. In some cases, a Program or Curriculum Coordinator is assigned to oversee a particular program (for example, Human Services/Social Work), while a Department Chair assumes all other responsibilities related to the department. The responsibilities of the Department Chairs or Program/Curriculum Coordinators are enumerated in the MCCC DAY CBA (20.06).

All credit classes and programs (in all modalities) are overseen by the Deans of the three academic schools, and thus there is no differentiation of the protocols for oversight and evaluation. The content, quality and effectiveness of program curricula is evaluated on an ongoing basis by Deans, Department Chairs and Program and Curriculum Coordinators, who solicit input from various external stakeholders as part of the program review process (see Standards 2 and 4 for more details about program review). When modifications to programs and/or courses are indicated, or when demand for a new program or course has been determined, a department chair or program coordinator will typically initiate the curriculum change process, which requires planning with external and internal stakeholders (advisory boards, faculty colleagues, accreditation bodies, Dean of Academic Initiatives, transfer institutions, etc.), approval of the School Dean, followed by a peer-review by the faculty Curriculum Committee and, pending recommendation of the Curriculum Committee, review and approval by the CAO. When determining whether to create new programs or courses, criteria to consider include, among other considerations, alignment with statewide transfer pathway guidelines (if applicable), demonstrated need/market demand, and readiness to implement (e.g., qualified faculty have been identified to teach in the subject area; sufficient instructional resources are available). Some curriculum changes (e.g., new program options, changes to degree names, new certificates) require further notifications to the DHE, while new degree programs (as well as Certificate programs with more than 30 credits) require the approval of the BOT, as well as the BHE.

The organizational structure is regularly reviewed and at times altered after considered evaluation (What is the timeline for such a review? Who reviews? When was it last reviewed?). The College has restructured reporting lines when as a result of consideration of the scope of a particular unit, the audience that it serves and its function are determined to be more effectively supported by housing in a different unit. For example, Adult Basic Education reported to Students Affairs before a 2018 restructure placed it into Workforce Development under Academic Affairs given the noncredit instruction as well as the community outreach and career readiness aspects of the program which could better leverage the Workforce Development connection with regional employers. Also, a major restructuring of the Academic Affairs division was recently implemented in response to fiscal challenges and enrollment trends, as well as a need for greater organizational efficacy. In a two year period, a series of reorganizations and personnel changes have resulted in the consolidation of five academic schools into three, and a restructuring of academic departments from 40 to 20.

The importance of the roles of faculty and staff in college governance is recognized in the MCCC DAY CBA (4A.01): “The Employer recognizes the importance of the advisory role of unit members in matters of College governance, including the improvement and development of academic programs and resources.” An All Unit Congress (AUC), in existence since Fall 2013,
provides a forum to “effectively represent the vast majority of those who work at Springfield Technical Community College…[including] all full-time or part-time employees below the level of director, regardless of union status.” (AUC Bylaws) The AUC (comprised of 660 members as of fall 2020) is co-chaired by elected leaders, one from the faculty and one from the professional staff.

The AUC, whose bylaws indicate a “formal relationship” with the BOT, includes five standing committees (a Coordinating Committee, and committees on Academic Affairs, Facilities and Staff, (Professional and Classified) Staff, and Curriculum. The Coordinating Committee convenes a General Assembly at least twice every semester, and Standing Committees (chaired by elected individuals) generally meet monthly. The AUC also has the power to form subcommittees as needed, including in the areas of student support services, staff support and resources services, college activities, and communication and marketing (examples of subcommittees that have been convened include those on parking, copy center services, and classroom technologies). Motions may be proposed, and voted upon, by the body of the General Assembly. If concerns emerge, “[t]hose authorized by the Congress will present these findings to the college’s President and the STCC Board of Trustees, making them aware of the problems and concerns of the All Unit Congress and to implement solutions.”

In addition to the AUC, members of the College’s two unions have formal opportunities to engage with administration over matters of concern. The AFSCME CBA (Article 33, Section 2) provides for a campus-level Labor/Management Committee “to discuss matters of mutual concern to the campus and local Union.” The Committee comprises 3 members of campus administration (selected by the President) and 3 members of the union (selected by the union), and meets 4 times a year “unless mutually agreed otherwise.” The MCCC DAY CBA (Article XXII) provisions a similar committee known as the Management Association Committee on Employee Relations (MACER). MACER comprises 3 members of campus administration (selected by the President) and 3 members of the Association (selected by the Chapter President), and meets at least once per month during the academic year unless the parties mutually agree that there is no need for a meeting.

While the AUC does not include significant student participation, it does provide a representative of Student Government special observer status so that the AUC can be made aware of concerns. However, the college makes provisions and provides opportunities for all interested students to contribute views and judgments formally and informally in all matters where they would have a direct and reasonable interest. First, the student-elected Student Trustee provides perspective and voice to all matters before the BOT, and holds weekly office hours for meeting with other students. Also, the Student Government Association (SGA) presents formal opportunities for the student body to make its collective voice heard. The SGA’s purpose, defined in its Constitution (see workroom), is “[t]o represent the student body in view and opinion of student and campus issues, without personal bias; to maintain channels of communication among the administration, faculty, staff, and students; to encourage participation in student activities and campus wide development; to ensure proper and continuous training of student representatives.”

The SGA is led by a Steering Committee of 6 members, including the Student Trustee (non-voting member), Student Body President, Student Body Vice President (who serves as its Chair), the Campus Activities Board (CAB) Chair, a Treasurer and a Club Liaison. The first three positions are determined through a general election by students in April of each year, and
eligibility includes 12 completed credits with a GPA of 2.8 or higher, as well as an enrollment status of ¾ time (9 credits) for the Student Body President and Vice President, and full time (12+ credits) for the Student Trustee. The Steering Committee convenes an open student forum each semester to provide an opportunity for students to voice opinions and ask questions. The forum takes multiple formats, including Pizza with the [College] President and Coffee and Conversation with the SGA, and complements other events hosted by SGA, such as a Holidays Around the World celebration of cultures. A Student Issues subcommittee of the SGA solicits and organizes student volunteers for participation on college-wide committees organized by administration or by the AUC. The Student Body President and the Student Trustee also represent the STCC student body through membership on the statewide Student Advisory Council, whose mission is to “represent and advocate for the students of all public higher education institutions and their respective needs within the Commonwealth” (Student Advisory Council bylaws).

**Appraisal**

**Governing Board:** The BOT, under leadership of Chair Marikate Murren, plays an increasingly active role in the governance of the College, and has made demonstrable efforts to invite perspectives from the campus community—especially those of the STCCPA—to be shared with the BOT. As evidenced by Chair Murren’s commissioning of an ad hoc committee to review program closures, as well as indications that the BOT wishes to make reinstatement of programs fiscally feasible for the College, the BOT is responding to community concerns in a proactive way. Chair Murren has changed other longstanding BOT practices since assuming her leadership role: until recently, annual presidential reviews were prepared by the Chair or by a selected group of Trustees. However, in the 2019-2020 year, the Chair Murren convened an ad hoc committee that provided information to assess the President’s performance. The group prepared a draft evaluation which was sent to the entire BOT for review and further input, resulting in a final report which was presented to the President, and subsequently submitted to the Commissioner of Higher Education. The BOT, however, has not yet conducted a required comprehensive review of the President, and does not have a process in place for regularly evaluating its own effectiveness. Board members have also acknowledged the need for the BOT to review and update its bylaws (and, in the process, more clearly define charges of its committees).

**Input is needed from the BOT about how they:**

1. help the College make strategic decisions and confront unforeseen circumstances
2. assure attention is given to succession planning for institutional leadership

**Internal Governance:** Since the College’s Interim Report was submitted to NEASC/CIHE in 2016, a new President was appointed, and recent years at STCC have been marked by significant changes in the College’s administration. Over the past three years, in particular, personnel changes at the senior leadership level have been sweeping in scope. In this time, the College has had three Chief Academic Officers (including an interim appointment), three Chief Financial Officers (including two interim appointments), four Chief Student Affairs Officers (including two interim appointments), four Human Resources officers (including three interim appointments), three Assistant Vice Presidents for Technology/CIO (including one interim appointment); and three Assistant Vice Presidents of Workforce Development (including one
interim appointment). During this same time period, several Cabinet-level positions were created (namely, a VP of Institutional Effectiveness, Assistant VP of Student Affairs/Dean of Students, Assistant VP of Administration/Facilities, Assistant Vice President for Technology/CIO, and a VP of Advancement and External Affairs); however, three of these positions were eliminated, with the Assistant Vice President for Technology/CIO and the VP of Advancement and External Affairs remaining.

As a result of recent Academic Affairs restructuring (July 2018 to present), two Academic Schools were dissolved and their Deans’ positions eliminated, and two new Deans (one currently interim, and one permanent) were appointed. An Assistant Academic Dean was appointed for each of the three schools, but one (in Liberal and Professional Studies) has since resigned, and has not been replaced due to pandemic-related budgetary constraints. In the Fall Semester of 2020 new interdisciplinary academic clusters within the School of Liberal and Professional Studies as well as the School of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math were instituted in an effort to develop more macro, disciplinary-related departments, rather than narrow and micro, academic departments (two exceptions to this change were Biological Sciences and Mathematics, which, because of their large size, warranted remaining as individual departments).

While organizational changes have been made by the President in an effort to streamline and better position the College, some employees have been apprehensive about changes in senior leadership. Continuity-of-service concerns (ie, disruptions in the implementation of initiatives), the loss of established working relationships and environments, and layoffs and reductions in workforce are among workers’ fears when such changes occur. Faculty and staff have repeatedly questioned the migration of what appears to be an inordinate number of talented, respected and productive members of the administration and management workforce. In Spring 2019, the AUC unanimously approved a resolution authorizing the AUC leadership to “address the President, Board of Trustees, and NECHE regarding the impacts of division restructuring, and the lack of AUC or [MCCC] Professional Association opportunity to provide input on the potential negative impacts of reducing the number of Divisions to three.” (AUC Minutes, March 27, 2019, in workroom) Based on sentiments expressed by the AUC body, there is a sense that leadership changes, especially those at or above the level of dean, have resulted in a lack of trust, stability, transparency and communication. In response to questions about a perceived exodus of experienced employees, the President provided data (Fulltime Employees - Retirements et al 2016-2019) to the college community that showed that retirees accounted for about 1/3 of recent full-time employee departures, a trend in line with Baby Boomer retirements. The data also showed that 47% of full-time employees (ie, 83) who departed the College in this approximately 4-year period had resigned their positions. Of those who resigned, 58% had worked at the College for fewer than 4 years.

While changes in senior leadership are not uncommon during times of transition in executive leadership, and while they are intended to move an organization toward its goal of streamlining operations or functioning more efficiently, they are often disruptive in the workplace and spur issues related to employee satisfaction, morale and turnover, all of which hinder the College’s need for a positive, engaged workforce. The AUC has expressed a desire for leadership to more effectively communicate how and why decisions—especially those impacting the college’s organization—are being made. Specific concerns expressed by AUC members regarding management personnel changes include the loss of institutional knowledge and loss of diversity in upper managerial positions. Many of these concerns formed the basis of an October 2017
MCCC and AUC “no confidence” vote in the President, and calls for the resignation of the former BOT chair.

Following the “no confidence” vote, the AUC membership expressed the desire to have more communication with the BOT over its concerns. AUC meeting minutes from December 10, 2018 indicated that the BOT, through its then-Chair, expressed a willingness to listen to the concerns of the AUC through its representatives. However, AUC minutes dated May 1, 2019, highlighted the general assembly’s ongoing concerns about a lack of communication between the AUC and BOT. AUC minutes dated October 21, 2019, and BOT minutes dated November 25, 2019 detail a marked improvement in communication with the current BOT chair, as she had recently met with AUC leadership, and AUC members, welcoming changes in BOT leadership, felt the BOT members were asking for more faculty input, and wanted more regular meetings that are inclusive. Additional AUC minutes dated December 9, 2019 explain how a meeting was held with the president, BOT chair, and AUC co-chairs to discuss the campus climate. In March 2020, the BOT’s Internal and External Relations Committee received a report from the AUC’s co-chairs, in which the co-chairs stressed the desire of the AUC to strengthen its relationship with the BOT, shared concerns of its membership related to consultation of faculty in decision-making, merging of academic schools, and the value stream mapping initiative. This demonstrates a recent improvement in the overall effectiveness of communication between BOT and the AUC.

Additionally, at its August 24, 2020 meeting, following administrative announcements of several program closures and faculty retrenchments, the BOT heard directly from the STCC PA President about specific concerns the PA membership had regarding the rationale on which the decisions were made, the process by which the decisions were executed, and the extent to which the BOT exercised oversight in these decisions. After an ad-hoc committee of the BOT was subsequently established to study the closures of the programs, the STCC PA President was invited to present arguments (and supporting data) for their reinstatement.

Besides concerns about personnel changes, the AUC membership has also expressed a desire for input into decisions that immediately impact them, and their departments. In January 2019, members expressed concerns about administrative plans for relocating the academic programs in Building 20 when that building needs to be vacated due to ongoing infrastructure challenges. Specifically, members were concerned that faculty and staff would have no input into the process. However, in April 2019 a campus-wide and student survey was distributed, resulting in 120 responses from the College community, the results of which were shared with the BOT at its May 20, 2019 meeting. The survey increased transparency and communication and provided the campus community an opportunity to comment or make suggestions. Furthermore, meeting minutes from the Committee on Ways and Means dated October, 8, 2019, detailed how the president met with all program faculty currently located in building 20 to emphasize the importance of vacating the building.

While organizational changes and resource reallocations have undeniably created concerns among many employees, improvements resulting from a number of these changes have been recognized by the larger campus community. Such improvements include resources to better support faculty (ie, the hiring of three instructional designers), a new guided pathway and degree in health science, a formalized program review process, a campus master plan, an academic plan, an increase in funds allocated to marketing the College (including the hiring of a full-time
webmaster), formalized early college initiatives, a renewed focus on enrollment management practices (including attempts to improve the admission funnel yield, and maximize efficiencies in course offerings), increase in the number of transfer agreements negotiated with 4-year institutions (more than 25 have been added since 2016), and the revival of a College for Kids summer program to enhance community relations.

An area of governance that has received a good deal of attention recently has involved the curriculum oversight process. Prior to Spring 2018, the Curriculum Committee functioned as a stand-alone committee, disconnected from the AUC. Its voting membership included faculty representatives from each academic school, appointed to the committee by the academic deans. The group operated without bylaws and consequently requirements for quorum, term limits, and process were undefined. In discussions regarding bylaws and membership, a proposal from an AUC member was made to include certain staff members as part of the voting membership, in recognition of the perspectives they may have to offer; however, AUC members ultimately chose to grant voting rights only to faculty, recognizing the importance of faculty oversight (see AUC Minutes of September 16, 2019). The AUC designated 4 non-voting advisory members below the rank of director (from the areas of admissions, advising, library and the registrar), and designated the Dean of Academic Initiatives (or designee) as a permanent non-voting guest. Significantly, the bylaws exclude attendance of any non-unit professional “at or above the rank of Director… unless recognized as permanent guest under sections B.3 and B.4 or explicitly invited by the voting membership.” Strengths of the Curriculum Committee include its independence and broad representation of faculty from across the College, its consideration of perspectives from representatives of key enrollment and academic support areas, and its transparency (all pending curricular changes are made available to the campus community for at least two weeks in advance of Committee consideration, and recommendations of the Committee are also made public to the campus community). Weaknesses of the curriculum governance process include late proposal submissions (which inhibit thorough review by the Academic Dean and others), lack of consistency in the quality and breadth of supporting documentation, and a paper-driven process that requires routing and “wet” signatures, which creates opportunities for delays and lost documents.

Input from student leaders suggests that the student governance system is effective, and that administration is responsive to concerns raised by the student body through their elected representatives, often reaching out to student leaders to solicit their feedback. Recent examples included the use of common student areas by gamers, as well as other students who were concerned by the boisterous environment in which they often found themselves; as well as student concerns about changes to the student parking policy, which recently changed from a parking lot assignment model to a first-come, first-served model. Student leaders hold office hours in a prominent location in the new Learning Commons, and are very accessible to the student body through channels such as their forums, email accounts, and outreach to the entire student body each semester. One concern regards the need for ensuring that Student Government Association leaders remain accountable to each other. While mechanisms exist for removing leaders who violate the Student Code of Conduct, no formal mechanisms exist for assessing the effectiveness/participation of SGA leaders, and student leaders have expressed the desire to develop a peer-review process that would entail a midyear review of each other’s work.

A governance survey was distributed to all 789 College employees by the Standard 3 Committee in late October 2020. The purpose of the anonymous survey was to gather viewpoints regarding
mission, trust, empowerment, communication and accountability. The 184 respondents were predominantly (71%) full-time employees and members of the two collective bargaining units (also 71%). The survey was adopted from one periodically administered at York County Community College titled the *Cornerstones of Governance Survey*. Key findings from the survey related to governance, detailed below, reveal a mixed picture of campus engagement, trust and communication, and suggest there is considerable room for improvement in the areas of governance and campus culture.

- Almost half of the respondents (48%) feel that administration, faculty and staff model respect, tolerance and civility towards each other and other members of the College community.
- A majority of respondents (58%) do not feel that communications among college constituents are open and carried out in good faith, in an atmosphere of trust, and 56% do not believe that the institutional culture supports the expression of dissenting views without reprisal.
- While most respondents (64%) feel that members of the College community are encouraged to participate in college initiatives, fewer than half (43%) feel personally motivated to participate.
- Almost half of the respondents (48%) reported that they are consulted about decisions that impact their area of responsibility, and 53% believe they have opportunities to give meaningful input on issues where they have an interest, but not primary responsibility.
- While most respondents (53%) believe that committees, schools, departments and individuals have an appropriate degree of autonomy in their areas of responsibility, very few (24%) believe that recommendations from these constituent groups are consistently implemented.
- While respondents were evenly divided on their opinions about whether college information is quickly and effectively communicated, only 37% felt that decisions were effectively communicated in a timely fashion.
- A majority of respondents (52%) don’t feel that our institutional culture supports open channels for input and feedback throughout the decision-making process, and almost half (48%) don’t feel that the culture makes effective use of the experience and expertise of the college community.
- Respondents were evenly divided on whether the College consistently follows its own published policies and procedures.
- Only 30% respondents feel that lines of accountability and responsibility are well understood, and even fewer (25%) believe these lines are documented. However, most respondents (67%) know who to go to with concerns, and 59% know who to go to with new initiatives and policy recommendations.

Concerns about communication are certainly not new to the College, and were reflected in past accreditation reports. Today, communication is hampered by many factors, including the organizational divide between administration and the AUC; the lack of formal opportunities in our governance system for input and participation from all campus constituents; the lack of systematic documentation and sharing of committee work (e.g., meeting minutes); a governance body (AUC) whose very existence is predicated on a “formal relationship with the Board of Trustees” but whose organization has neither a mechanism nor a commitment for such a
relationship; and a need for faculty and staff to more frequently hear from—and be heard by—campus leaders, especially those at the Cabinet level.

Lack of engagement in college governance (also not a new problem at STCC) further compounds challenges in ensuring that the institution fully benefits from the strengths and talents in our organization. While certainly some may be “too busy” to participate in committees and initiatives (and while most governance survey respondents acknowledge that members of the College community are encouraged to participate in college initiatives), others express concern that their time and effort spent in such work will be for naught (as evidenced by the few respondents who believe that recommendations arising from constituent groups are consistently implemented). Concerns expressed by employees in the survey about the freedom to express dissenting views also point to a lack of trust and good faith that further inhibits participation. These factors invariably lead to a system of governance that is inclusive in theory only, and one in which the viewpoints and concerns of the few may not truly represent those of the many.

**Projection**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Projection Detail</th>
<th>Est. Time of Completion</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College administration, Board of Trustees (BOT) and Coordinating Committee of the All Unit Congress (AUC)</td>
<td>Review shared governance models and best practices for shared governance to ensure all campus stakeholders are represented in the most productive manner.</td>
<td>Academic Year 2021-22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOT</td>
<td>Conduct periodic comprehensive review of the President</td>
<td>Academic Year 2021-22 and ongoing, per BHE guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOT</td>
<td>Conduct regular assessments of effectiveness, to include external perspectives</td>
<td>Academic Year 2021-22 and ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOT</td>
<td>Review BOT bylaws and update, as needed</td>
<td>Academic Year 2022-23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>Review organizational structure and administrative functions annually with the BOT’s Internal/External Committee.</td>
<td>Academic Year 2021-22 and ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President and Cabinet</td>
<td>Re-evaluate the means by which Executive leadership formally communicates with the campus community to determine if other formats may be conducive to greater communication</td>
<td>Summer 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College administration</td>
<td>Administer a governance survey annually to the campus community, and share the results widely</td>
<td>Academic Year 2021-22 and ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUC</td>
<td>Develop and annually administer to its membership a survey of effectiveness</td>
<td>Academic Year 2021-22 and ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee</td>
<td>Task</td>
<td>Time Frame</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coordinating Committee of the AUC</td>
<td>Ensure that meeting minutes are recorded and shared in a publically-accessible repository</td>
<td>Academic Year 2021-22 and ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Committee Chair and Academic Affairs Office</td>
<td>Implement electronic curriculum change process</td>
<td>Fall 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Government Association (SGA) and Student Activities Office</td>
<td>Develop and implement an annual peer-review process for SGA officers, to include a midyear evaluation</td>
<td>Academic Year 2021-22</td>
</tr>
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Standard Four: The Academic Program

Description

STCC’s associate degree offerings reflect the comprehensive nature of the institution, and accommodate the diverse needs of the College’s students. STCC offers 26 Associate in Science degrees (encompassing 42 options) in the areas of STEM (science, engineering, technology and math), professional studies (business, early childhood, and criminal justice), and allied health. These programs, reflective of the College’s technical mission, are designed to prepare students for immediate employment while, in some cases, preparing them specifically for transfer to baccalaureate programs. The College also offers 2 Associate in Arts degrees (encompassing 10 options) in the liberal arts and general studies areas which offer students the flexibility to pursue many transfer pathways established through the statewide MassTransfer program or through agreements with private institutions. To increase access, some programs (mostly in the liberal arts, business and education areas) are offered through multiple modalities. Specifically, 24 programs are offered at more than 50% online (with 2 of these offered 100% online), and many courses (particularly general education courses) can be completed in 7-week “flex terms,” 5 or 10-week summer terms, or a 4-week winter intersession. In addition to associate degree programs, STCC also offers three types of credit certificates, which are designed to prepare students for immediate employment and, in most cases, subsequent pursuit of an Associate degree.

The College publishes the learning goals for each program in their respective program pages in the college catalog and on its website. The institution recognizes the need to communicate program goals to students to help them understand the knowledge and academic outcomes, as well as skills and competencies they can expect to acquire. Each program page includes other useful and anecdotal information to connect students to the program and help them further engage with the respective departments. This may include alumni stories or other information about careers connected to program outcomes. On the website, a curriculum checklist is also provided for each program, which allows for a printable and coherent way that students may follow their own progress in the program. Additionally, the curriculum is available on each program website, organized by semester, so that a student or prospective may see how progression looks if a full course load is achieved each semester; this includes clickable links to course descriptions and course-level objectives and competencies. Policies for admission for the college can be found here. Where program prerequisites are required or specific programmatic admissions requirements are necessary, these are detailed on the program pages. Specific instructional methods and procedures are detailed at the course level on the syllabi.

Assuring Academic Quality: The Vice President of Academic Affairs serves as the Chief Academic Officer (CAO), and exercises direct oversight and authority over the academic planning process, including curriculum, enrollment, budget, facilities issues, and technology concerns. The CAO meets with the President weekly to review matters such as hiring of faculty and professional staff, academic program issues, faculty support, enrollment goals, and addressing financial needs. Reporting to the CAO are the 3 School Deans, who work directly with faculty in programmatic and curricular decision-making. (Other responsibilities of the CAO are detailed in Standard 3.) The faculty of the College play a primary role in program revision and in the development of new programs. They identify the future direction of
programs based on the needs of industry, transfer institutions, and accrediting bodies. With these external perspectives, faculty make curricular decisions at the department level and in collaboration with their Academic Dean; this work is usually led by the Department Chair or Curriculum Coordinator (if applicable). (More information about the curricular governance system can be found in Standard 3.)

Faculty have direct responsibility for program review. Externally-accredited programs in the School of Health and Patient Simulation undergo reviews in a scope and frequency determined by their accreditors (typically, these accreditation cycles are 7-10 years in length). Since 2018, all other programs at the College have been subject to an Academic Program Review (APR) on a five-year cycle. The APR process is led by a Program Review Liaison (a member of the faculty who is typically serving as a department chair or curriculum coordinator), who, with other faculty as well as institutional research and assessment professionals, analyzes data on market demand, enrollment trends, student outcomes, demographics and program costs. The liaison prepares a self-study document, develops recommendations, submits the report and action plans to the Dean and the CAO, and presents findings to the campus community in a public forum. The goal of the program review is the articulation of agreed-upon action plans for further development of the academic program. (More detail on the program review process can be found in Standard 2.)

The College recently formalized its academic planning activities by producing an Academic Plan with the input and participation of faculty, academic and student affairs administrators, and academic support staff. The plan sets goals and priorities over a three-year period, and will be used to support resource/budget planning through the life of the plan. (More about the Academic Plan can be found in Standard 2.)

Program eliminations, where necessary, have been monitored at the Dean’s level to ensure teach-out mechanisms are in place for students to complete their program requirements. Notification of teach-out arrangements for discontinued programs are a collaboration between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs. Students are formally notified of their program’s discontinuance, and are contacted by an advisor to discuss a plan for completion. Students intending to complete their program are asked to sign an academic plan form indicating their understanding of the timeline and agreement to take courses in a particular sequence in order to complete their program. If transfer opportunities to other college programs are an option, students are advised of these. After the closures of multiple programs in summer 2020, the College was also required to submit reports to the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE) detailing the numbers of students requiring teachout, plans for teach-out (including faculty and timeline), and alternate options for students (for example, transfer agreements with local colleges) who are unable to complete their programs in the planned timeline. While these closures did not require the submission of a teach-out plan to the Commission per the Policy on Teach-Out Plans and Teach-Out Agreements, the CAO did in fact notify the Commission staff of the program closures immediately following their announcement in June 2020.

In 2016, the College received a substantive change approval from the Commission to offer both options of the Business Administration AS (career and transfer) 100% online. Since then, the program options were reviewed by the Business Administration department during the initial program review cycle. Changes were made to the career option to make it more relevant and responsive to some of the industry suggestions from the department’s advisory board, including
the addition of coursework in advanced spreadsheet applications, database applications, and oral communication. Because scheduling in the Business department is difficult due to low enrollment for both program options, cyclical scheduling is used to ensure that requirements and electives in both program options are offered in both modalities (online and on-campus) to ensure students have flexibility in scheduling and their needs are supported. The online business programs have enrolled students since 2018, and in the first year they saw an 86% increase (career option) and a 44% increase (transfer option), in headcount (Fall 2020 enrollments are 42 and 25 for the career and transfer options, respectively). While students applying to business programs are asked to identify their preferred modality (in-person or online), the enrollment patterns of those who identify as “online” students reveal that they take courses in both modalities (as reported in the College’s July 2019 status report to NECHE on its online business programs, students in the online option completed 18% of their credits onsite in Academic Year 2018/19).

**Undergraduate Degree Programs:** The majority of the undergraduate programs are structured so that in the first year, students take general education courses as well as programmatic requirements. Required coursework is clearly outlined on the website as well as on the academic plan developed for each student, which in essence serves as an advising checklist. Each program has a general education requirement as well as a major requirement. The curriculum is designed to ensure that students meet the program learning goals as well as develop the college’s five core competencies (critical thinking, digital literacy, information literacy, quantitative reasoning, and written and oral communication). Assessment as to how well STCC students demonstrate core competencies is done through the [Core Competency Assessment](#) process, discussed in detail in Standard 8.

**General Education:** The college’s five core competencies form the basis of the general education program at the College. Students develop these competencies in courses identified as meeting general education requirements, and further develop them while pursuing coursework in the major. The college’s classification of courses as “general education” is informed by the statewide [Gen Ed Foundation](#), a component of the statewide MassTransfer Program (in which every public institution of higher education in the Commonwealth participates). The [Gen Ed Foundation](#) is a 34 credit block of courses that, once completed, is guaranteed to transfer as a portable block and to satisfy the general education requirements of the receiving institution. The distribution of the 34-credit block is as follows (note: a modified version of the [Gen Ed Foundation](#) for STEM programs consists of 28 credits, eliminating 3 credits each in the 1st and 2nd categories):

- Behavioral & Social Sciences: 9 credits
- Humanities & Fine Arts: 9 credits
- Natural & Physical Science: 7 credits, includes one course with a lab
- English Comp/Writing: 6 credits
- Mathematics/quantitative reasoning: 3 credits

In implementing MassTransfer, every institution of public higher education in Massachusetts determines which of its courses align with the six categories above. General guidelines for course eligibility are provided in the MassTransfer Implementation Guidelines, and every course offered by the College that satisfies one of the MassTransfer Gen Ed categories is so designated in the college catalog and on the website. Students in any of the 19 associate degree programs
that incorporate the MassTransfer Gen Ed Foundation (or its modified STEM version) are required to complete the entire block as a graduation requirement. The 33 other degree programs that do not incorporate the Gen Ed Foundation—exclusively AS programs—require a mix of general education credits that are determined by the needs of the individual departments, and that meet the minimum threshold of 20 credits. Besides courses that satisfy the MassTransfer Gen Ed Foundation, only Computer Basics: Concepts and Applications is considered a general education course at STCC, due to its direct alignment with the college’s digital literacy core competency.

To ensure that all associate degree-seeking students demonstrate competence in written communication, every degree program requires English Composition 1. Programs differ in their choice for the next level of English skills depending on their needs: most programs incorporate English Composition 2, a course intended to further hone students’ academic writing and critical thinking skills, while a small number of programs, mainly in technical and health areas, require a Technical Writing or Fundamentals of Oral Communication course.

**The Major or Concentration: (this section is still in development)**

**Transfer Credit:** Transfer credits are reviewed by the Admissions office subject to the College’s Transfer Credit Policy, which is consistent with the systemwide Massachusetts Community College Transfer Principles. The Principles were developed as part of the BHE’s statutory mandate from the Massachusetts legislature (M.G.L. c. 15A, § 9(v)) to “implement a transfer compact for the purpose of facilitating and fostering the transfer of students without the loss of academic credit or standing from one public institution to another,” and ensure that each community college (as well as each state university) accepts transfer credit in a reasonable and transparent manner. Only college-level courses with grades of C- or higher from regionally accredited institutions are eligible for transfer. Courses for which the College has no equivalency are routinely accepted in transfer to fulfill elective credit requirements. While Admissions staff make most transfer determinations based on established course equivalencies (including those in the statewide public higher education course equivalency database), Department Chairs are consulted when their expertise is needed for making a transfer credit determination. If students are not satisfied with a transfer credit determination, they may submit an appeal to an Ombudsman (the Dean of Academic Initiatives) to request an appeal of the decision.

**Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit:** STCC defines its credit hour in accordance with Commission policy. All courses are constructed to allow students to achieve the stated outcomes/objectives. Lecture courses meet for 50 minutes per credit hour (one contact hour) each week of a 14-week semester. A typical onsite 3-credit lecture course would meet for a total of 150 minutes per week, either as three 50-minute class sessions, two 75-minute class sessions, or another configuration adding up to 150 minutes. For each hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction, students should assume a minimum of two hours of additional work outside of class. For online courses (as well as hybrid classes, which combine online and face-to-face modalities), students are expected to devote the same amount of time as with onsite courses, and engage regularly with the instructor, such that course outcomes/objectives are achieved.

The College’s two degrees, the Associate in Science and the Associate in Arts, comport with common higher education practices in their length (although, in fact, most STCC students are part-time and take longer than 2 years to complete these “two-year degree” programs), content and level. Generally speaking (and in contrast to AA programs), AS programs have a greater
focus on the major, with only one third of the credits constituting general education (although 9 AS options are designed to incorporate statewide MassTransfer Gen Ed Foundation requirements, and are therefore more likely to incorporate a higher general education mix). Credit requirements for the 50 associate degree programs range from a minimum of 60 to 72. Ten programs require 60 credits, and about a half require 64 or more credits. Programs requiring 64 or more credits are predominately in the technologies and engineering areas, and include 8 externally-accredited health programs. Some health programs have, among their admissions prerequisites, additional college-level courses, effectively pushing the credit count even higher (up to 79). Candidates for associate degrees must complete a minimum of 25% of the credits in their major in order to fulfill the College’s residency requirement. Candidates for certificates must complete a minimum of 12 credits in their major.

Course offerings and schedules are posted 3-6 months in advance of each term start on the College’s website. Class meeting details, as well as instructional modalities, are included on the schedule, as are notes about the offerings (for example, courses that use open educational resources are noted). In compliance with federal textbook disclosure requirements, required course materials are also posted on the website and are directly accessible from the schedule of classes. As part of the curriculum governance process (detailed in Standard 3), academic departments are required to develop and maintain course competencies and objectives for every course. These documents, accessible to the public via the “learning objectives” link in every course description on the college website, detail the objectives of the course and the specific skills that will be attained in the course.

The institution oversees all aspects of the credit-awarding process, and credit instruction is offered exclusively by employees of the college. The contractual use of checklists for course materials to be included on a syllabus (MCCC DAY CBA, XIII-E2 for full-time and part-time faculty covered under the Day contract, and MCCC DCE CBA, Form DCE-E1 for adjunct faculty) ensures that all course syllabi include the following items: the course description, course topics and assignments, teaching procedures, basis for grading, procedure and criteria for evaluating student performance, and a tentative schedule of assignments and tests. Department Chairpersons complete these checklists each term while reviewing the syllabi and provide the checklists to the school dean to be retained in the personnel record (per contract, syllabi are not retained by the institution). While credit is awarded at STCC for developmental work designed to prepare the student for college-level coursework, these credits are neither transferable nor applied toward graduation requirements.

The College awards credit-by-examination for Advanced Placement, CLEP and departmental challenge exams (the latter are available to matriculated students for a nominal fee, developed by College faculty and administered by the College’s Testing and Assessment Center, but credits earned are not counted towards a student’s residency requirement). Valor Act Academic Credit is awarded at STCC and those credits are reviewed in the Admissions office. Other credit-for-prior-learning opportunities include the awarding of credit based on industry credentials that a student may have earned (e.g., CISCO certification in an IT field), or hands-on evaluations done during a meeting with the student where they exhibit their knowledge (e.g., Introduction to Computer Systems). Each of these credit-for-prior-learning opportunities are detailed on the statewide My Experience Counts website.
Other forms of credit awarded by the college include Learn and Earn internships and directed studies, which are certified by faculty after determination that learning objectives have been met. Internships are initiated by special arrangement through a faculty member in concert with the Department Chairperson. Staff in the Career Services office assist students in locating internship opportunities, while they work with a faculty advisor to ensure specific learning objectives (negotiated by the faculty advisor and student in advance) are met, and that academic integrity is maintained (see Learn and Earn Internship Agreement, in workroom). Credit is awarded upon successful completion of the tasks, assignments, or learning objectives as detailed within the student’s agreement, and the grade is assigned by the faculty advisor. Directed study arrangements are subject to a contract (sample in workroom) that is developed between the faculty member and the student, and usually involve an advanced area of study not currently covered by an existing course offered at the College. The contract specifies the number of credits to be awarded, the scope of the study, scheduled meetings with instructor, learning outcomes, and criteria for evaluation. At the conclusion of the directed study, the faculty member assigns a grade.

The College maintains only one instructional location, but typically offers some courses at other community locations, including courses for incarcerated individuals at the Hampden County Correctional Center, courses for dual enrollment students at West Springfield High School, and courses for Early Childhood educators at local childcare centers. These courses utilize course descriptions and other course materials as provided through STCC curriculum and are taught by our adjunct faculty. At none of these locations may a student complete 50% or more of an academic program.

Articulation agreements are established with institutions that students have previously attended (high school) and with receiving institutions for baccalaureate programs. Statewide articulation agreements with technical high schools and the MA community colleges exist for 14 different subject areas, many of which are applicable to students entering STCC. College faculty have also worked locally to craft articulation agreements in specific fields like Mechanical Engineering Technology, Technical Arts and Design, Energy Systems, etc. Details regarding articulation agreements with STCC as the receiving institution can be found here.

In addition to the College’s active participation in the statewide MassTransfer program (which includes the portable GenEd Foundation, statewide transfer pathways, and completion incentives such as the Commonwealth Commitment), STCC has partnered with many public and private colleges and universities to offer seamless transfer pathways for specific academic programs, in addition to joint admission opportunities with other Greater Springfield-area campuses. Details regarding these programs can be found on the transfer agreements webpage.

The Academic Standing Policy defines the minimum requirements for students to maintain good academic status. Any student who has not earned the minimum sufficient GPA is placed on academic warning. Students who receive academic warning will be suspended if, after a subsequent semester, they fail to meet the minimum cumulative GPA requirements as defined in the policy. Students may appeal their suspensions by meeting with an Academic Review Board (comprised of student affairs professional and faculty) and negotiating conditions (e.g., repeating failed classes or reducing their credit load) necessary for improving their academic performance. The Academic Review Board also ensures that students get connected to the many support services available to them (as detailed in Standard 5).
For authentication purposes, all students are issued a STCC username and password, which is needed for access to multiple systems, including the Blackboard Learning Management System (LMS). Students access online courses are with these credentials, and activity logs embedded in the courses track the amount of time students spend in each area of every course. Communication takes place through Discussion Boards, Announcements, and through connection of the college email system. For further verification, instructors can create passwords for exams and quizzes that are unique for each student. Additionally, the use of SafeAssign plagiarism software is assistive for those who utilize LMS course shells to administer their examinations, to help prevent plagiarism.

**Appraisal**

Through its wide array of academic programs, STCC is committed to addressing regional workforce needs. In line with the Pioneer Valley Labor Market Blueprint 2018-2022 and the College’s Student Success Plan 2015-2020, the College has placed particular emphasis a particular focus on diversifying the local labor pool in the areas of health care and advanced manufacturing. The Mechanical Engineering Technology, Nursing, and Dental Hygiene programs and have seen significant increases in minority enrollment between 2015-19, as well as a significant increase in minority students graduating with associate degrees in Nursing and Mechanical Engineering Technology. In 2019, STCC conferred more than double the amount of Nursing and Mechanical Engineering degrees completed by minority students in comparison to 2015. Also, in response to a Student Success Plan goal attract more students to Health programs, improve race/ethnicity and gender equity in enrollment of these programs, as well as improve race/ethnicity and gender equity in completion of health programs, the College recently (2019) launched a new AS program in Health Sciences to address the need for a clearer pathway for students who are interested in a health career but perhaps undecided or unprepared to enter a competitive-admissions program directly. For years, students who had indicated an interest in studying allied health at the College (“pre-health” students) were the single largest group of matriculated students at the College, and a diverse one (when the Health Science program was launched, 18% of pre-health students were Black, and 33% were Hispanic). The College developed the Health Science program to enhance the talent pool and increase the diversity among the student body in the College’s health programs (at the time, students of color were very much underrepresented in the College’s health programs, with only 7% Black and 15% Hispanic students). By offering the Health Science degree, the College is reaching a wider group of prospective students within its ethnically and racially diverse community, and in so doing will enhance the diversity of the local healthcare workforce. The curriculum embeds patient simulation experiences, marketable certifications, and math and science requirements common to most health programs, and provides a guided pathway to a meaningful career in healthcare. After the first year of study, students are prepared to provide care in one of the following healthcare fields: Emergency Medical Technician, Patient Care Technician, Phlebotomy Technician, or Sterile Processing Technician. Upon completion of the program, graduates are prepared to enter into more advanced and competitive allied healthcare programs (such as nursing, dental hygiene and diagnostic medical sonography) for further career advancement. By Fall 2020, the Health Science program had grown to an enrollment of 146. Current demographics in the College’s health programs, which still reveal underrepresentation of students of color, show a slight improvement since Health Science was launched: In Fall 2020, Black students
represented 9% of students in health programs, and Hispanic students represented 24% of this population.

While the array of academic programs and pathways at the College, especially those in the areas of liberal arts and professional studies, affords students ample options, it also makes the process of deciding on a major more complicated, especially for first-generation students. Institutional data indicates that many students (more than 20% of first-time STCC students who return for a second year of studies) change their majors within one year, suggesting a need for the College to better support students in exploring career options, as well as to scaffold the first-year experience to minimize the chances that students will “lose” credits when they switch from one major to another. By developing a common semester across multiple programs, with embedded career exploration coursework such as the First Year Experience course, as well as math coursework appropriate to the discipline, the College could better scaffold the first-year experience and position students for academic success.

**Assuring Academic Quality:** The new APR process initiated in 2018 ensures that every program at the College will be reviewed and assessed on a regular basis, and that faculty will have a substantive voice in that process. A strong emphasis on follow-through with student learning outcomes and assessment (both direct and indirect) will keep the institution’s focus on action steps that will result in student success. Additionally (and as detailed further in Standard 2), a regular review of the process itself will help to more closely align the product and process with not only the expectations of the Commission but also with the unique needs of our institution. However, while the APR process has been an integral tool in supporting the college’s mission and providing actionable items for continuous improvement, some faculty, citing the subsequent closures of 5 of the 14 program areas that have undergone APR (due to reasons related to enrollment and/or operational costs), have expressed concern that the results of an APR process may be used to support the closing of their programs. Clearly, program review will be successful only to the extent that it is done in an atmosphere of “good faith,” trust and a common understanding that its primary (or sole) goal is the systematic improvement of the academic enterprise.

**General Education:** While the College observes general education requirements as set forth in the Commission’s Policy on Credits and Degrees, the College has not established a working definition of an educated person that can inform a common understanding across all programs (such a definition would also support efforts by the College to assess the effectiveness of its general education program). Courses defined by the College as “general education” are primarily those that meet MassTransfer Gen Ed Foundation requirements. While the Gen Ed Foundation courses satisfy general education requirements for students transferring to another Massachusetts institution of higher education, these courses have not been mapped to general education competencies referenced in 4.15 (e.g., scientific, historical, and social phenomena; aesthetic and ethical dimensions of humankind, etc.), but only to the broad MassTransfer categories of humanities, English composition and writing, behavioral and social sciences, physical and natural sciences, and math and quantitative reasoning. Thus even in the case of the 19 programs that incorporate the 34-credit Gen Ed Foundation, the College cannot ensure that graduates have been exposed to an “adequate breadth” of general education, since the distribution of coursework, while substantive, is not necessarily coherent (the intentional flexibility built into the curriculum of most of these programs, to support the needs of the intended transfer institution, further confounds this challenge). This is exacerbated further in career-based
programs that require only the minimum number of credits per Commission policy. Many of these programs, in the health and technical areas, have determined their general education requirements to the extent that they support the learning outcomes of their programs, but not necessarily in a way that ensures breadth (for example, these programs tend to preference social science courses rather than humanities in their general education mix). By adopting a common definition of an educated person and reflecting on the general education competencies reflected in the College’s core competencies, as well as the “primary domains of knowledge” noted in 4.17, the College community could better ensure that its general education program is, in fact, both substantive and coherent. In so doing, the College would introduce more intentionality into the subsequent design of general education courses, as well as the distribution of the general education requirements in each program. Conducting this exercise will also give the College an opportunity to reassess its core competencies, and determine if others (for example, civic learning) should be added.

The Major or Concentration: (this section is still in development)

Transfer Credit: The College’s transfer credit policy benefited from the BHE’s statewide transfer reforms. When the Massachusetts Community College Transfer Principles were in development, a survey of transfer practices across the entire system of public higher education revealed that most community colleges in the Commonwealth had stricter minimum grade requirements for transfer than did the Universities, including the UMass system. In response, the College’s All Unit Congress recommended the College change its minimum required grade for transfer from a C to a C-. This change was implemented in 2014, as was the incorporation of language in the College transfer policy about the right of students to appeal transfer determinations with which they disagreed. (In academic year 2019/20, 1494 students transferred coursework to the College, averaging 5 courses in transfer with a median grade of B at their previous institution. As many as 17% of these students earned transfer credit for courses in which they had earned a C- grade.) The College’s generous residency requirement (the minimum prescribed by the Commission) allows for the transfer of up to 75% of a student’s credits, allowing students to receive as much credit as possible. Transfer credit is accepted only for coursework that satisfies a student’s programmatic requirements (for example, some programs such as Nursing have a higher minimum grade requirement than a C-), ensuring that the student’s Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) will not be threatened by extraneous credits considered in the calculation of their SAP status.

Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit: The implementation of statewide MassTransfer A2B Pathways in over 15 subject areas has proven helpful to faculty in determining the curricular scope of transfer programs, as well as reducing the number of credits required in these programs. In some cases, programs that in the past required more than 70 credits (Biology Transfer and Chemistry Transfer) were reduced to 60 credits as a result of the statewide agreements. However, the preponderance of degree programs requiring more than 60 credits is an issue of which the College needs to be watchful. In some cases, external accreditors dictate curricular requirements, but in many of cases, particularly in technical programs in the STEM areas, requirements should be closely examined to determine if credits can be reduced without impacting the essential programmatic learning goals. Particular emphasis should be placed on programs that require more than 60 credits yet include elective requirements that do not fulfill a general education purpose.
In a recent (fiscal year 2018) statewide study of credit-for-prior-learning activity at each of the 15 Massachusetts Community Colleges, data revealed that STCC was in in “the middle of the pack” with respect to the numbers of students (208) to whom it awarded credit for prior learning. In FY 2018, Advanced Placement credits represented 37% of STCC’s 1134 credit-for-prior-learning credits, followed by Departmental Challenge Exams (21%) and credits articulated from vocational high schools (18%). The comparative data showed that some sister colleges were doing remarkable work with other forms of prior learning assessment, including local evaluation of student learning outcomes, portfolio assessments, and the like. While 13% of STCC’s 2018 graduating class had earned some credit-for-prior-learning during their time at the College, most other institutions had broader PLA impact among their graduates (in some cases, as high as 23%, even at institutions larger than STCC). Particularly in light of the fact that STCC is the only technical community college in the state system (and technical programs are concerned with just the sorts of competencies and skills that lend themselves well to prior learning assessment), it is clear that the College needs to expand its capacity in this area by developing both policy and process, as well as identifying courses for which portfolio or demonstration assessments can be conducted, training advisors who can assist students through the process of seeking credit-for-prior-learning, and engaging faculty in developing rubrics that can be applied consistently across evaluators. (Recent changes to the MCCC DAY CBA acknowledge the burgeoning need for these forms of PLA by providing compensation parameters for faculty who evaluate portfolios for prior learning assessment.)

### Projection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Projection Detail</th>
<th>Est. Time of Completion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Education Task Force</td>
<td>Formulate—and recommend to the campus community—a definition of an educated person that can be considered and adopted by the college. The Task Force will also make recommendations on any other general education components (such as civic learning, for example) that should be considered for adoption by the College.</td>
<td>Fall 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Education Task Force, Department Chairs</td>
<td>Determine in which courses general education competencies (including in humanities, science/math, and social sciences), as well as the College’s five core competencies, are taught to students.</td>
<td>Academic Year 2021-22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Review Liaisons, Department Chairs and Academic Deans</td>
<td>In APR process and programmatic accreditation review, ensure that the general education requirements of all programs ensure adequate breadth for all degree-seeking students, utilizing information mapping general education competencies to courses</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deans of STEM and Liberal and Professional Studies, along with their respective Department</td>
<td>Incorporate academic pathways into more transfer programs, embedding a common first semester (either a &quot;liberal arts core&quot; or a &quot;STEM core&quot;) with a math course appropriate</td>
<td>Academic Year 2021/22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairs; <em>First-Year Experience Coordinator</em></td>
<td>to the pathway, and either a first-year experience course for new students, or an exploratory course for transfer students covering areas such as project design, transfer readiness, and career readiness.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Math Department</td>
<td>Revise STEM and Business math pathways to improve transferability of courses and enhance student preparation for Calculus.</td>
<td>Academic Year 2021/22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Portfolio Committee</td>
<td>Create guidelines and a process for assessing portfolios of student work for the purpose of awarding course credit. Identify those courses for which prior learning credit may be awarded.</td>
<td>Fall 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Deans and Department Chairs</td>
<td>Through the APR process and programmatic accreditation review, all academic programs that require more than 60 credits will be reviewed to ensure that all coursework is critical to the learning outcomes associated with each program. Where possible, credits will be reduced to bring the programs closer to 60 credits.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Review Liaisons, Department Chairs and Academic Deans</td>
<td>Pending a favorable response by the Commission to the College’s request for general approval for distance education, implement 100% online options for programs in Human Services/Social Work, Early Childhood Education, Liberal Arts/General Studies, Criminal Justice, Computer Information Technologies, and Office Information Technology</td>
<td>Academic Year 2021/22</td>
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</tbody>
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Standard Five: Students

Description

STCC, an open access institution, attracts people with varying backgrounds. Walking into a classroom, it is not uncommon to find a teenaged dual enrollment student sitting next to someone taking advantage of the senior citizen tuition waiver. It is also likely as one walks through the cafeteria to hear a handful of different languages being spoken. While STCC prides itself on its diverse student body we recognize the work to be done to create an inclusive and equitable institution.

Admissions: STCC’s student population is reflective of the population of its surrounding community as noted in the recent United States Census Bureau information (US Census), where White and Latinx students hold the largest majority, followed by Black students. As the Springfield area continues to become more culturally and ethnically diverse, STCC has seen a steady rise in the number of students who self-identify as a member of one or more ethnic or racial minority groups. In 2015, STCC was designated a Hispanic Serving Institute (HSI) and was awarded a Federal HSI-STEM grant, allowing the College to provide additional academic and other enrichment programs for students who identify as Hispanic. (Enrollment data is available on the Institutional Research page.)

The institution recognizes that the “traditional student” population (those students enrolling in college directly out of high school) is generally in decline in Massachusetts, and actively welcomes nontraditional students. The STCC website provides prospective students with the guidance and information to “Get Started” in a way that is “customized” to the group to which they identify. Specific tuition waivers or action steps reside under each category to assist the student in finding the resources they need. Categories include:

- High School Graduate/GED/HiSET
- Incoming Transfer Student
- College Now/Dual Enrollment
- International Student
- Senior Citizen
- Student Veterans and Service Members
- Undocumented/DACA
- Former Student (non-graduate)
- Returning STCC graduate
- Guest Student (non-degree-seeking)
- Parent/Guardian

In keeping with the statewide mission of Massachusetts community colleges, STCC is an open access admissions institution, which provides any high school graduate or Ged/HiSET diploma holder the opportunity to enroll in any academic program at the College, although some programs (generally in the allied health area) have more stringent admission requirements. Open access allows the Admissions team to recruit students from area high schools, community-based agencies and the public at large. The focus of recruitment events is to engage individuals who reside in the Greater Springfield area, as they are the population the College primarily seeks to serve. Recruitment activities are numerous and varied. Admissions staff create many avenues for prospective students to engage with the college and learn more about our programs. These include:

- Regional college fairs
• High school college nights
• Meetings with students of all levels on an ongoing basis in local schools
• Presentations promoting college awareness at local community-based organizations
• Panel discussions about college opportunities
• Consultations with employees at area businesses who are interested in returning to school
• “Instant acceptance” events
• Biannual Open House programs
• Individual meetings with prospective students about the College’s 78 different associate degrees and certificate options

STCC’s admission policy is clear and follows the Commonwealth of Massachusetts’ policy on affirmative action, equal opportunity and diversity. Admissions policies are frequently reviewed to make sure they are fair, clear, and consistent with the mission of the institution and meet all Federal and state requirements. For admissions into selective programs (those for which the number of applicants exceed the number of seats in the program), applicants are reviewed based on established admission criteria which are developed by each selective academic department to ensure a fair and equitable process. Criteria may consist of satisfactory completion of prerequisite courses, documented professional observations (for example, job shadowing), or program-specific admission tests. Each selective program has different criteria which are developed with recommendations from their program advisory committees and their accrediting bodies. Each application is reviewed, and points are awarded based on the established admission criteria for the program desired. Applicants with the higher scores are offered admissions until all available spots are filled after which a wait list is developed using the same criteria. Admissions standards for selective programs are reviewed annually by each selective program Department Chair, in concert with their Academic Dean, to ensure fairness and equity. If changes are needed, the Department Chair follows the curriculum change process to implement them (for example, in September 2019 the Occupational Therapy Assistant department initiated changes in its admissions pre-requisites. A review of challenge exams and CLEP options were considered as avenues by which students could satisfy these prerequisites, and efforts were made to ensure the prerequisites were in line with requirements of other health programs).

STCC adheres to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments (ADAAA) of 2008 which states that "no qualified individual with a disability shall, solely on the basis of their disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity in higher education.” STCC is committed to the success of all students, and ensures full access to its programs and services to students with disabilities. The Office of Disability Services (ODS) provides accommodations, services and auxiliary aids to students with disabilities. ODS works closely with faculty to ensure that the academic integrity of each course remains intact, while preserving equal access to course content and materials for qualified students at the same time.

Entering students are required to complete the entrance assessment before registering for classes; students may be exempt from taking this assessment based on certain criteria. Students whose performance on the entrance assessment indicates a need for support to succeed at the college level, are directed to non-credit developmental courses in the areas of reading, writing, math, and keyboarding skills. These courses are intended to support student success and the overall retention rate of the College. In line with the STCC’s mission to “support students as they
transform their lives,” the admission policy provides students with the opportunity to enroll in college while they develop the skills necessary to succeed and a “second chance” to many students who may have struggled academically at the high-school level or who have been out of the education system for a significant amount of time.

Retention and graduation of students remains a fundamental goal of STCC. Admissions and Advising staff work closely with various academic programs, Academic Deans, and grant-funded programs to better assess where additional student support may be required. Enrollment and graduation data provides valuable information for many of our enrollment and marketing-related efforts. Two such reports, Enrollment Management Perspective 21SP Updates and Insights along with Enrollment Management Perspective 21SP FORCAST, are excellent examples of data collection and forecasting that assist many enrollment-related offices, along with marketing, to clearly project various enrollment scenarios based on key data points. This information along with historic data related to enrollment, retention, and graduation helps to provide clear guidance to the institution as we plan for the future. Forecast modeling is done through a historical lens to garner data for the semester to come.

The goals and strategies embedded in the 2018 Student Retention Plan (SRP, described in greater detail in Standard 2) provide guidance to student affairs staff in supporting retention goals, with a particular focus on the information that is provided to students through the college’s website. Additionally, the focus of New Student Orientation (NSO) to improve the prospective student’s navigation of the admissions and registration process, is a key element. The NSO was originally an in-person event, but was converted to an online presentation after COVID-19 prevented campus visits. As of the start of Fall semester 2020, 1191 (or 48% of those invited) incoming first time freshmen had participated in the online NSO. In contrast, only 36% of invitees participated in the in-person NSO held in Spring and Summer of 2019.

A one-credit First Year Experience (FYE) course, redesigned from the College Success Seminar previously offered, was developed by a cross functional group during the 2018-2019 academic year. The course’s goal is to support students’ acculturation and sense of belongingness, in service of increasing their retention. The curriculum, with a focus on preparing students to successfully navigate college, assists students with self-exploration, career exploration, and understanding STCC’s many services and departments. Since its initial offering in Fall 2019, the FYE course has been embedded as a requirement in several programs, and its impact on student retention and completion rates is being evaluated.

STCC’s other recent initiatives and programs align with the student retention goals and ultimately with the mission of College, including:

- Supplemental Instruction (SI) program – Launched in 2016, the SI program, which is supported by a Title III grant, has a positive effect on reducing equity gaps and increasing performance for low-income and students of color. It is an academic support program in which peers, or SI leaders, assist students both in and outside of the classroom in many subject areas including science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). These peer support programs are effective because students can be assisted with one-to-one support that allows them to engage with the material differently and clarify the knowledge they have already gained. Part of the success of the SI program is attributed to a comprehensive semester-long training component, stemming from the philosophy that successful training cannot be a singular event. As a critical component to ensuring the SI
leaders’ success, the program is designed to foster a strong sense of community amongst the SI leaders and the students they serve. Prior to the start of the semester, SI leaders are required to attend a two-day workshop covering topics such as group facilitation skills, cultural competency and language. SI faculty are invited to attend the second day of training, having the opportunity to spend the first half of their day working with their colleagues and the second half working with their assigned SI leaders to prepare for the semester to come. This kick-off training event is followed up with weekly training sessions for the SI leaders, with faculty being invited to attend throughout the semester.

- **HSI-STEM** – In 2016, STCC received a 5-year HSI-STEM grant to increase the number of Hispanic and low-income students to enter, persist, complete and transfer in STEM fields. The focus was to redesign how STEM courses are delivered, and how support services are provided for students. For instance, a new teaching strategy called Process Oriented Guided Inquiry Learning (POGIL) in which students work in self-managed teams of four has been implemented. Its focus is to increase students’ critical thinking skills. Also, two full-time academic advisors with specific focus on STEM academic programs were added to the College’s advising staff in 2017. These staffers provide STEM students counsel on course options and career paths. In 2019, the STEM Center became operational, providing students with tutoring in STEM courses, access to a computer lab with STEM software, and space for individual and group study, along with classrooms allocated to teaching, proctoring, and presentations.

- **STCC** has recently won a State Career Pathways Grant for the Early Childhood education program. This grant provides a range of supports for students in the program, including a new Early Childhood Education Liaison. The role of the Liaison is to work closely with early childhood students and provide bilingual support in both English and Spanish.

**Student Services and Co-curricular Experiences:** STCC offers many programs and a systemic approach designed to provide assistance in helping students achieve their educational goals. The STCC website provides resources to help students understand these educational services. These offices and departments include:

- **Academic Advising & Transfer Center**, which provides continuous academic support, career exploration, educational planning and transfer options.
- **Student Success Center**, provides one-on-one tutoring, study skill techniques, success planning and additional support services for students that are at risk of failing.
- **TRIO** Student Support Services, is geared to support first-generation college students and economically disadvantaged students.
- **Office of Disability Services**, provides guidance and support for students with disabilities that seek necessary accommodations and accessibility.
- **The Office of Veterans’ Affairs**, provides assistance to all veterans seeking a college education.
- **Career Development Office**, works closely with area and regional employers to assist them in finding students/graduates to fill their job openings.
- **Writing Center**-Support for all types of writing; essays, research papers, etc.
- **English Language Learner Services (ELL)**- Serves students for whom English is a second language

The characteristics of the students informs the institution in a variety of ways, including admissions activities, academic program offerings and student support services. Student Support
Services encompasses multiple departments, programs, initiatives, grants and personnel that provide holistic student support. Programs and departments include:

- **Center for Access Services** (CAS), provides a broad range of non-academic supports, including housing assistance and campus and community resource access.
- **Armory Square Child Care**, To support the needs of the students and their families, STCC hosts an on-campus day care center.
- **Health & Wellness Center**, Partnership that allows for students to receive professional health and counseling services.

Other programs and departments that assist students, are in alignment align with STCC Core Values and focused on student success. They include the IT Help Desk, Online Learning, Library, STEM Center, and the Testing and Assessment Center

STCC provides its students with increased access to mental health services via mental health support. River Valley Counseling has an office in the Ira H. Rubenzahl Student Learning Commons (B19). To be eligible, students must carry health insurance. Students identifying a need or desire for personal counseling can be seen by a licensed professional therapist.

STCC offers College Now, a dual enrollment program that allows high school and home school students to enroll in one free STCC credit course per semester if they meet the eligibility requirements (they must be a Junior or Senior in high school with a minimum high school GPA of 2.0 and they must maintain a 2.0 GPA for any College Now courses). This on-campus college experience (except during the pandemic, when College Now offerings were online, solely) allows high school students to take college-level courses to fulfill high school graduation requirements and/or to pursue an academic interest. This program, fully subsidized by the College, has a direct impact on equity to access in higher education within the Greater Springfield community (during STCC’s 2018-2019 academic year, more than 555 course registrations were offered through the College Now program; Springfield residents represented 55% percent of the College Now population).

In Fiscal Years 2020 and 2021, the College secured Commonwealth Dual Enrollment Partnership grants in collaboration with West Springfield Public Schools to advance a long-standing partnership between the institutions that supports dual enrollment pathways in advanced manufacturing and health care, among other areas. Another partnership, with The Springfield Empowerment Zone Partnership and the Springfield High School of Commerce, brought to life an Early College program for Commerce students, beginning in Grade 10. This program affords Commerce students to access to college courses, noncredit training opportunities, and support services. Six credit pathways (Computer & IT Security, Human Services, Business, Multimedia Design, Health Science, and Criminal Justice) are offered, in addition to an “applied career” pathway offered through the Workforce Development office. Students may earn up 19 college credits in the program while still enrolled at Commerce.

STCC seeks to fulfill its access mission by ensuring that no student is denied an education because of financial need. The college website has detailed information about financial aid, eligibility, the application process, what types of aid STCC participates in, as well as links to the online application to apply for aid. Individual financial information is accessible to students through their student portal account, which reminds them to both file for aid and gives tips and links to apply for aid, completing their file including having access to financial aid forms, and
answers questions once students are awarded. The student portal also provides direct access for students to view their individual accounts related to both financial aid and their student bill. The Office of Student Financial Services (SFS) assists students with financing their college education. Staff assist students throughout the application process and provide current information on various types of aid programs and options, some of which include grants/waivers, federal work-study programs and loans. Additional SFS services include working closely with the Educational Opportunity Center, allowing representatives to be available, by appointment, throughout the year to complete the FAFSA with students and parents. SFS also sends both electronic mail and standard mail reminders about applying for aid. This outreach continues throughout the academic year, with SFS contacting students who have incomplete financial aid files via mail, e-mail, and phone calls on a regular basis throughout the academic year. SFS also conducts a “FAFSA Day” event annually on campus, encouraging students (and their parents, if they are dependents) to bring their identification and their tax information to apply for financial aid. This event includes SFS staff and trained STCC volunteer staff, and offers flexible hours from 8 a.m.-7 p.m.

SFS staff ensure that students fully understand the implications of incurring student debt. Student borrowers are required to complete an in-person entrance counseling session, where they are informed of their rights and responsibilities as student loan borrowers. Continued financial counseling is required for each academic year that a loan is secured. Certain types of loans, such as a living expense loan, will require the student to complete a budget worksheet that directs students to the National Student Loan Data System to view their existing loan indebtedness. Students are directed to various calculators—as well as the Bureau of Labor Statistics—to determine potential annual salary based on their future occupation. They then figure what their anticipated monthly payment will be including the loan that they are currently asking for as part of the borrowing process. STCC has recently secured a Financial Literacy Coordinator position funded by the Guardian Life Insurance and Money Management for Life Program Grant, which promotes financial literacy for both the college and members of the community. The Financial Literacy Coordinator meets with students one-on-one for financial counseling, hosts workshops, and refines any tools that are prepared for students’ use to support their financial well-being.

STCC offers an abundance of activities outside of the classroom. As of 2019, there were 27 active clubs and organizations sponsored by the Student Activities and Development Office falling into two co-curricular categories: academic program-based (e.g., the Business Club which hosts events like local industry leaders) or special interests-based (e.g., the Anime Club). In addition, several clubs and organizations provide support and representation to a variety of student populations (e.g., the Black Student Association, LGBTQ Pride Club, the Black & Hispanic Women’s Association, the International Club, Muslim Student Association, and Veterans Club). The Student Activities & Development Office assists students who wish to establish a new club or organization. This office organizes various trips to events and locations throughout the northeast, and is responsible for Student Government (see Standard 3), the Campus Activities Board (CAB), and the Student Ambassador program. CAB plans and organizes various types of events on campus (the CAB Chair, Treasurer and Club Liaison are appointed positions that play important roles in encouraging students to participate in campus life and providing resources and information to our clubs and organizations). Student Ambassadors act as peer role models and advocate for new and continuing students, provide information and resources, represent the student community at internal and external events, and
encourage student involvement in co-curricular life at STCC, all while developing their own
communication and leadership skills. STCC also has a dedicated Office of Multicultural Affairs
which provides diverse educational programming experiences for students, faculty, and staff.

Supporting student engagement has been especially critical during the pandemic, when
opportunities for physical gatherings are extremely limited. Through the Offices of Community
Engagement, Multicultural Affairs, and Student Activities & Development, the College has
focused on opportunities for students to engage with each other and the campus community in
virtual, but meaningful, ways. Student Activities & Development converted the in-person
Student Government elections to an electronic process and in doing so, saw an increase in
participation compared to previous years. All student clubs and organizations have new spaces in
Blackboard, the 15th Annual Diversity Speaker and Performance Series was hosted virtually and
STCC launched its inaugural chapter of The National Society of Leadership and Success.
Additional leadership and mentoring opportunities including LEAD Empowerment Program, and
the MILE - Male Initiative for Leadership and Education have provided engagement
opportunities in the virtual space.

STCC offers, controls, and maintains recreational and athletic programming for all enrolled
students. Its recreational program consists of the fitness center, which offers students, faculty and
staff the ability to train, sculpt and explore a healthy lifestyle. The center itself is equipped with
cardio, strength training and universal exercising equipment. It additionally provides a diverse
group of staff members who are trained and prepared to serve the campus community. The
College’s athletic programming consists of intercollegiate basketball, soccer and wrestling (past
programming included track & field, cross-country, volleyball and golf, but these have been
placed on suspension, pending budgetary concerns). STCC participates in the Massachusetts
Community College Athletic Conference (MCCAC) and adheres to the athletic standard
guidelines of the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA). To be eligible to play
in any of the athletic programs per the NJCAA guidelines, students must be full-time and
maintain a minimum GPA of 2.0 or above (although the College’s STCC’s academic
performance requirements ask that students maintain a minimum GPA of 2.5).

STCC has qualified staff members in student services who maintain confidentiality and use high
standards of integrity when dealing with students and their information; in Standard 7 this is
detailed in the Human Resources section. As employees of a state institution, staff must follow
Conflict of Interest Law as well as complete Conflict of Interest training offered by the
Commonwealth. Further, staff are expected to abide by provisions of the Family Educational
Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA); in addition, the Student Financial Services office has adopted
the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) and BHE
Statements of Ethical Principles, the BHE Code of Conduct, and components of the NASFAA
Code of Conduct, to ensure the highest ethical behavior and professional practices. For students,
the Student Code of Conduct, Student Grievance Procedures, and other academic and non-
academic policies and regulations are outlined in the Student Handbook available on the STCC
website. Also listed in the Student Handbook is the Policy in Support of Pluralism.

The College’s Student Information Privacy policy complies with FERPA and ensures that
students’ rights to privacy with respect to their educational records are protected. Training on
FERPA is offered regularly (at least once a year) to College staff and a member of the
administration is identified as the College’s FERPA officer, whose responsibility is to stay
abreast of changes to FERPA regulations, and provide training and guidance to the campus
community. The College retains education records in accordance with guidelines set by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. In the unlikely event STCC were to discontinue operations, arrangements would be made with the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education for the filing and maintenance of academic records. STCC would take reasonable steps to notify current and former students about the arrangements for the filing and maintenance of academic records. In addition, the Commission would be notified about the filing and maintenance of academic records in the event the College were to discontinue operations. STCC, while a public college, would also comply with the DHE’s Notice of Closure Guidelines for Independent Institutions.

Student record information is managed in several secure systems, including the main student information system software (Ellucian Colleague), an electronic form system (Dynamic Forms), a document imaging system (ImageNow), a data reporting tool (SAP Business Objects) and other ancillary systems, all of which are maintained by the college (or under the direct control of the College), and which require appropriate credentials for access to student records. A paper shredding service is used for document destruction when disposal of paper student records is required. Student records are secured either electronically or within physical barriers (locked office/locking file cabinet) and measures are taken within the student service offices to verify identifying information from students requesting support remotely (phone, email, live chat, etc.).

**Appraisal**

**Admissions:** The “STCC Shuffle” is an internal term used to reference the sometimes-cumbersome process students experience as they complete the steps for enrolling at the College. In our previous physical space on campus, this required students to move to multiple locations and buildings to complete the task. To help remedy this, the new Ira Rubenzahl Learning Commons was designed to facilitate a more streamlined administrative process for students by intentionally co-locating offices to provide a more expedient flow for students and the public. As a result of a value stream mapping initiative throughout the 2019-2020 academic year, a new student checklist was created to assist new students through the onboarding process. Once students have completed NSO, they are contacted by email and phone for one-on-one outreach and support. The teams in the Academic Advising & Transfer and Testing & Assessment Centers schedule individual appointments to guide students through “next-steps” towards fall semester enrollment. A student survey was sent to new incoming students for the Fall 2020 semester. Questions focused on the onboarding process and how it can be improved. (Incorporate results of this survey into the appraisal)

In its present virtual environment, the College has made even more concerted efforts to help students navigate the enrollment process. Chat Now, an online tool that has been used by the Academic Advising & Transfer Center since 2011, has been adopted by Admissions, Student Financial Services (Financial Aid), Information Technology Help Desk, Library, Health & Wellness Center and the Testing & Assessment Center. There is also a Chat Now operator for general information. From March 5 through April 5, 2020, at the outset of the campus curtailment, the number of unique engagements in Chat Now was 170. The highest month of activity to date took place August 5 through September 5, 2020 with 3,841 unique engagements.

Another major effort, emphasized with COVID-19, is the recent (2020) implementation of an electronic form (e-form) system, which allows students to quickly, conveniently and securely submit required information. E-forms have been deployed by Student Financial Services, Admissions, Center for Access Services, Registrar, and Disability Services. Many paper-based
forms were converted to electronic forms, while new forms were created to address business needs. Examples of e-forms that have been deployed include the request for Debt Appeal, Share-A-Concern reporting for the Behavioral Intervention Team/CARE team, Medical Re-Entry Process, Student Emergency Fund request, Emergency CARES Act Application, and all forms related to financial aid file completion. The use of e-forms and e-signatures has shortened the timeframe for students to access and complete documents. In 2019-2020, the timeframe for Student Financial Services to complete financial aid files was approximately 4-5 weeks. With the implementation of e-forms and e-signatures this has been reduced to 1-2 weeks. The Registrar’s Office has also deployed e-forms which have allowed for quicker access and processing of requests for students and alumni alike.

The Enrollment Management team successfully converted to remote operations by implementing targeted recruitment campaigns through email, phone calls and a series of live social media events. Further, the Testing & Assessment Center partnered with faculty in English and Mathematics to convert placement testing to an online format. The transition took approximately 3 weeks during which time placement testing was not available to new students. Even with the time to convert the placement tests, the percentage of students completing the test was down less than 1 percentage point when compared to fall 2019. Similar proactive engagement strategies include targeted call campaigns and virtual advising appointments. Student Affairs has teamed up with Academic Affairs, Student Financial Services and Marketing to host “Choose Your Own Adventure” virtual registration days for new and returning students. Students have the opportunity to attend sessions hosted by admissions, advising, testing & assessment and student financial services. STCC’s team of advisors are available on Chat Now and for one-on-one appointments via phone or Google Meet.

Recognizing the need for students and families to gain earlier financial aid awareness, SFS has incorporated new marketing materials with a link on the New Student checklist that directs the student to the SFS webpage. Along with this, a comprehensive brochure that details How to Complete the FAFSA in 6 Simple Steps is now available to students. Early awareness should encourage students and families to apply and complete documentation sooner, resulting in awards being made closer to the time of billing. The desired outcome is to educate as many students on financial literacy/awareness leading to more successful financial outcomes leading to more academic success.

Student Services and Co-Curricular Experiences: During COVID-19, STCC recognizes that our students continue to face challenges. The Center for Access Services (CAS) provides students with a broad range of non-academic support. Information was placed online to ensure accessibility and the CAS team communicated with students by phone or email. A Student Emergency Fund, designed to assist students who encounter an unexpected, short-term financial emergency that would prevent them from continuing their education, was developed and its application for funding is available online. STCC’s goal remains mission-focused; to assist students so that they may continue their studies and successfully complete their coursework. Of the $3.7 Million in initial CARES funding received by the College, $1.4 Million has been sent (as of December 2020) directly to students based on the Federal eligibility guidelines.

Based on individual discussions with students of color, informal group discussions and formal group discussions, students want to see themselves reflected and represented in the faculty/staff. STCC recognizes that hiring faculty of color is not a panacea - an African American faculty will not necessarily be able to relate to an African American student better or more naturally than a
faculty member of a different race since other identifiers like, class, gender, etc. also matter. However, it is well documented that if students see themselves reflected and represented in the faculty/staff, it matters in regard to expanding notions of what is possible and contributes to student success. This is an ongoing conversation on equity at STCC. The Anti-Racism and Inclusion Alliance (AIA @ STCC) was formed in October 2020. AIA’s charge is to continue to move forward with actions that address our own equity gaps and measure our success at addressing systemic racism. This Alliance will work to promote an integrated and systemic approach across the college-specific to diversity, inclusion, and equity, with the stated outcome of ensuring STCC serves as an antiracist institution.

The desire to eliminate barriers for students spurred a recent review of the College’s longstanding practice of deregistering student schedules due to nonpayment of a tuition/fee bill. Past practice included emails, letters and “robocalls” made to students who were at risk of being deregistered from their courses for the upcoming semester (although robocalls were discontinued after September 2019 due to concerns about compliance with the US Telephone Consumer Protection Act). New students who had already begun the financial aid application process were given extra time to ensure payment arrangements (but were still eventually deregistered if they did not respond to a phone call). Any student without a FAFSA on file was dropped. Personal phone calls were made by SFS and Registrar staff to the extent that staff were available, but not every student would receive a phone call due to resource issues. While staff were encouraged to “save” students from deregistration if it appeared a payment was imminent, this was more of a reactive approach to handling the situation. Emails and letters home were the primary source of connecting with students. In June 2020, Student Affairs staff were cross-trained by SFS to access and interpret financial aid information from Colleague. Student Affairs assisted SFS in making 100% personalized calls to students, alerting students to their status in the financial aid and payment process and to encourage next steps. The coordinated approach included contacting students by letter, email and by phone. If a Student Affairs professional had a connection/rapport with particular students, they would make contact with them. The result of this collaboration and personalized outreach was a reduction in the number of students unenrolled as a result of deregistration (166 students compared with 206, year-to-year). Although these numbers represent only a 20% reduction, the new process impacted the fall semester dramatically, thus reducing obstacles to persistence. In 2019, 1,327 student schedules were deregistered for the Fall term; in 2020, 665 schedules were deregistered, a decrease of 50%. Deregistrations can happen multiple times to the same student; in 2020 only 52 students were dropped more than once compared with 246 students in 2019, meaning 79% fewer students were dropped repeatedly. The new approach is more equitable and allows for a proactive and personalized approach that is educational rather than punitive. Deregistration data also reveals that Black students are disproportionately affected by this practice. Changing these practice in just one year showed a marked decrease in the percentage of students who were deregistered, from 19% to 12% overall, and from 28% to 17% for Black students.

As referenced in Standard 3, frequent leadership changes at the institution have slowed progress of some initiatives. This concern has been expressed by some student service staff, who have served under 4 Chief Student Affairs Officers (including 2 interim appointments) in the past 1½ years. In some cases, a specific initiative that would have typically only taken one semester to implement may have taken longer, as each new VP either sought to table the process until they became more acclimated within their new role, or they sought to make changes to it. (For example, while the former VP of Student Affairs indicated in his work plan, dated Jan-June
In 2019, there was intention to prepare an online version of the New Student Orientation by Fall 2019; this plan was not accomplished until Summer 2020 and employed for Fall 2020 incoming students. While this isn’t wholly unexpected during times of leadership change, during each transition there has been a sense of instability for staff, which led to blind spots in student support. However, with a renewed focus on Student Affairs leadership in the past nine months, fully 80% of the projected initiatives of the Student Retention Plan are either in process or completed. Specific steps to provide transparency to all Student Affairs employees, by the Vice President of Student Affairs, has been an integral focus of activities in that division. Communication opportunities, collaborative discussions, and sharing of campus-wide information are principles at the core of this proactive measure.

The use of POGIL is showing promising results in STEM courses based on outcome comparisons of non-program to program results. Students were less likely to withdraw from— and more likely to earn grades of A through B+ in—chemistry courses implementing the POGIL model (2% withdrawal, 77% A through B+) than from classes with the same professor prior to implementation (6% withdrawal, 51% A through B+). In addition, participation in POGIL has appeared to produce lasting effects for students’ future academic performance: students who passed General Chemistry I with POGIL were more than twice as likely to successfully complete the next course in the sequence (General Chemistry II, taught by a different professor) within one term (40% vs. 11-18% in previous cohorts). Students reported positive experiences with the POGIL model, with 93% reporting they enjoyed the teamwork aspect of the class and 81% reporting they would take another science class in the POGIL format.

Since the inception of the SI program in 2016, the program has grown to support over 2021 students. Of these students, 53% identified as students of color, while the remaining 47% identified as white. During the same time period, the data has shown that participation in the program has had a positive impact on student success and completion. Outcomes for students who were enrolled in sections supported by SI leaders revealed that students who utilized the program were more likely to receive a grade of C- or better each semester (81.7%) than students who did not utilize the program (68%). In addition, regardless of race and ethnic backgrounds, analysis showed that students who participated in SI review sessions were far less likely to withdraw each semester (6.34%) than students who did not participate (12.66%). While the number of courses offering SI fluctuates semester to semester, at its peak, the program supported students from 26 unique courses constituting 55 lecture sections and 17 lab sections. These quantitative outcomes combined with qualitative study have made it clear that students are not only eager to take advantage of the review sessions that SI Leaders offer but are finding the additional support to be instrumental in their college success. In addition to the successful impact the program has had on the students it serves, the program has shown to be extremely beneficial in promoting success among the SI Leaders themselves. Of the 107 SI leaders who have worked within the program, 91% have either been retained, graduated and/or transferred to another college or university. Interviews with the SI Leaders about their experiences have identified their group work as having a significant positive impact on their college experiences. By being intentional in creating a diverse cohort group, coupled by mandatory weekly group and individual training meetings, SI staff have been able to foster a sense of belonging and connectedness amongst the students.

The involvement of SI faculty is another critical component that has contributed to the success of the SI program. Faculty play a substantial role, identifying the students with whom they hope to
work and providing their names to program staff for interviews. Upon their hire, faculty agree to meet with their SI leaders on a weekly basis, acting as mentors and providing feedback regarding activities, materials, and strategies for review sessions. Additionally, SI leaders utilize their faculty when they have questions surrounding their work with students. There is a collaborative relationship between the faculty, SI leader, and program staff that has had a positive impact on program implementation and sustainability.

**Projection**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Projection Detail</th>
<th>Est. Time of Completion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Affairs</td>
<td>Increase student engagement through online platforms and improved electronic processes</td>
<td>Academic Year 2021-2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment Management</td>
<td>Develop and improve the onboarding process from exploration through registration by: Providing information to potential students regarding enrollment processes and virtual registration Improving NSO and continue offerings in dual modalities Onboard with technology training</td>
<td>Academic Year 2021 and ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Advising &amp; Transfer Center</td>
<td>Assess and improve the advising experience for students to ensure a more universal experience</td>
<td>2022 and ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several Departments</td>
<td>Centralize tutoring services with student, faculty, and staff input.</td>
<td>In place, start of Academic Year 2022</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Standard Six: Teaching, Learning and Scholarship

Description

Faculty and Academic Staff: Faculty are the lifeblood of the College and remain the primary connection to its past while delivering on the promise of its mission today and in the future (while only 4 of the 37 administrators who served on self-study committees during the College’s last comprehensive evaluation in 2011 still serve the institution, 24 of their 58 fellow faculty committee members continue to educate today’s STCC students). Faculty categories at STCC are defined by the two Massachusetts Community College Council collective bargaining agreements. The "Full-time and Part-time Day Faculty and Professional Staff” agreement (Day CBA) defines full-time faculty as "unit members occupying full-time positions as instructor, assistant professor, associate professor or professor," and part-time faculty as unit members "whose responsibilities may include teaching credit courses during any part of the academic year. Absent exceptional circumstances, no part-time faculty member shall be assigned more than three three-credit courses or their equivalent during any single semester." (1.02) The "Agreement for Division of Continuing Education" (DCE CBA) outlines the scope and workload of adjunct faculty (though it does not employ the use of the term "adjunct faculty"). Faculty covered under this CBA are generally those employees "teaching credit courses in the Community Colleges' Divisions of Continuing Education" (1.01). In Massachusetts, "Division of Continuing Education" courses are not state-supported, and therefore must be run at the expense of the college, at no cost to the Commonwealth.

Faculty are integrated into their academic departments primarily through participation in department meetings (held three times per semester). The meetings, chaired by Department Chairpersons and mandatory for full-time and part-time faculty, provide a forum for discussion and planning regarding curriculum, scheduling, and student performance. Adjunct faculty, while not required to attend department meetings, are invited to participate.

From FY 2017 to FY 2020, the College’s student enrollment dropped 9% in annual FTE, from 3731 to 3392. Data First form 6.1 shows that, in this same time period, the number of full-time faculty was reduced by 10% and the number of adjunct faculty was reduced by 3%. However, clinical faculty were increased by 18% and academic advisors by 45%. The number of librarians (4) remains unchanged, while 2 instructional designers were hired in FY 2019 to support faculty in design of online classes, with a third hired in FY 2021 to address the sudden need for online learning. In response to financial exigencies related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the College announced in June 2020 the discontinuance of degree and certificate programs in 8 academic departments, and the associated retrenchments of 11 full-time faculty members. This, in addition to retirements among the faculty, brought the full-time faculty count to 118 (and an additional 6 full-time faculty vacancies as the College began the 2020/21 academic year), when the College’s Fall enrollment dropped another 16% FTE from the previous Fall. An additional 139 adjunct faculty taught courses in Fall 2020 (18 of these individuals are also employed in other capacities at the College).

The workload of full-time faculty, defined in the DAY CBA (12.03), consists of two categories: 29-35 hours per week of instructional workload (teaching, preparation, and assessment of student performance); and 11 hours per week of non-instructional workload (student advising, 4 weekly office hours, college service including academic planning and governance participation, college-
recognized community service, and professional development activities). The workload of adjunct faculty, defined in the DCE CBA (13.01), includes instruction “in traditional and non-traditional learning modes,” preparation, assessment of student performance, an obligation to be “available to students by appointment when mutually convenient,” and participation in “not more than one faculty meeting per session.”

Academic staff such as advisors, librarians and instructional designers are considered Professional Staff under the DAY CBA, and their workloads are defined in the DAY CBA (12.04). Besides the specific duties outlined in their letters of appointment and position description (which is annually re-evaluated in consultation with their supervisors), Professional Staff workload includes student advisement (if assigned—neither librarians nor instructional designers are assigned advising responsibilities), college service (including academic planning and governance participation, and professional development activities), college-recognized community service (for example, serving on the board of a community-based organization), assigned instructional responsibilities and related preparation (“provided that customarily professional staff members shall not be assigned traditional academic discipline responsibilities”), and “other duties as assigned,” provided that they are related to the duties of the position as defined in the position description.

Preparation and qualifications for faculty and academic staff are aligned with the standards set by the CBAs, as well as the unique needs of each discipline. For teaching positions in the School of Health and Patient Simulation’s 11 programatically accredited degree/certificate programs, qualifications are determined by the governing and accreditation bodies that oversee the programs.

The process for recruiting and appointing full-time faculty is initiated by a request from the Dean of one of the College’s three academic schools. The Chief Academic Officer, in concert with the President and Chief Financial Officer, prioritizes requests on an annual basis and authorizes Deans to proceed with the search process when funding from the state appropriation is available. Priorities are given to positions that are critical to the offering of academic programs and necessary given the current (and anticipated) enrollment. Faculty job descriptions and posting follow a standard format, including a general statement of duties, title, salary range, qualifications, and anticipated effective date, per the DAY CBA (16.01). Most faculty positions are posted as "Instructor/Assistant Professor,” which allows the College flexibility to hire a faculty member (at the Instructor level) with only an Associate degree (provided the candidate has at least 4 years of directly related experience). Faculty positions are typically posted for 14 calendar days. To ensure a broad search, positions are posted on local websites such as MassLive.com, as well as national databases such as HigherEd Jobs, Chronicle Jobs, Indeed.com, The Affirmative Action Register, Diversity.com, Latpro.com., Black Issues in Higher Education, Hispanic Outlook, and The Spanish American Union. Also, local newspapers and professional associations are targeted. Prior to turning over applications to a search committee, HR screens applicant pools to determine if qualified minority candidates are among the applicants.

In consultation with the Chief Academic Officer, the Academic Dean assembles a search committee, including a combination of faculty, staff, and administrators. Guidelines for committee membership selection are provided in the Human Resources Hiring Manager Guide (HMG) and include a committee of between 4 and 12 members who “should work directly with the position and/or should be customers of the department” (HMG, p.2). The search committee
“should represent diversity of experience, age, physical ability, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, color, creed, nationality or origin, sexual orientation, etc.” (HMG, p.2). The Human Resources Office reviews the suggested member list and may offer suggestions before approving the list. Before viewing applications, search committee members are required to read and consent to "Search Committee Ground Rules" which address issues of fairness, confidentiality and participation. Academic Deans or their designees typically chair faculty searches, and must follow standard procedures outlined in the Hiring Manager Guide provided by Human Resources. After a thorough review of each applicant's resume and supporting materials, the Committee chooses candidates to interview. The Committee also agrees on a set of questions to ask each candidate, as well as the format and subject of a teaching demonstration to be performed by the candidate. Interviews are typically conducted in-person (unless circumstances—such as COVID-19 or transportation challenges of the candidate—necessitate a video conference), and each search committee member is asked to complete and submit to the Chair an "Interview Evaluation Form." For evaluation of the teaching demonstration, committee members are encouraged to use a rubric provided by Human Resources. In Fiscal Years 2019 and 2020, searches for 17 full-time faculty were conducted, and faculty were included in each search committee, with between 2 and 4 faculty serving on each committee. Faculty comprised 44% of the membership of these search committees.

By law, STCC must follow the Commonwealth of MA Board of Higher Education Policy on Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity and Diversity. This policy is noted in the STCC Employee Policies publication (p. 22), which is shared with all new employees upon their hire, and is sent to all employees annually for review and acknowledgement. All new faculty and academic staff hires covered under the DAY CBA receive a letter of appointment that includes the position title, department, date and length of appointment, annual rate of salary, and source of funding (e.g., state appropriation, grant, etc.). Adjunct faculty covered under the DCE CBA are provided contracts each term that includes the course assignment(s), date and length of appointment, salary step (see below), and compensation.

In an effort to support and retain professionals of color, the College supports three employee resource groups (ERGs). ERGs (also known as affinity groups or business network groups) are groups of employees who join together in their workplace based on shared characteristics or life experiences. ERGs provide support, enhance career development, and contribute to personal development in the work environment. In November 2012, the Black Professionals Group was launched with a mission “to create an avenue for sharing, socializing and networking, for seeking out talent and developing strengths. This group will foster a sense of community amongst the Black faculty and staff on campus, to positively benefit the college and the local community.” The Black Professionals Group helped create the Hispanic Association in Higher Education (HAHE) in 2013. HAHE’s mission is “to promote a greater knowledge and appreciation of the diverse array of Hispanic cultures. Our organization welcomes participation by individuals of any ethnicity. HAHE also seeks to enhance the social and economic status of our community- on campus and throughout Western Mass- by helping to create pathways for greater professional advancement. We intend to accomplish these goals through concerted efforts at recruitment, promotion and retention.” In November 2020, a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and/or Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual and/or Ally (LGBTQIA+) ERG was launched with a mission to create a safe space and build community for LGBTQIA+ employees at the College, contribute to efforts to create a more inclusive campus, engage in campus initiatives focused
on equity and inclusion, and build opportunities for the College to engage in local, state and national advocacy for the LGBTQIA+ community.

Salaries and benefits for faculty and academic staff are collectively bargained, and parameters for compensation of full-time employees are determined by a classification system that was first implemented in 1999 (DAY CBA, Appendix B). The system was updated in 2017 to a salary grid system that provides for salary increases based on changes in rank (for faculty) or grade (staff), length of service, attainment of new academic credentials, receipt of tenure, and satisfactory post-tenure reviews. New faculty and professional staff are offered a starting salary based on the calculation of a data form (MOO2 for faculty; MOO4 for staff) in which experience, education, and other factors are converted to points to determine a salary figure. New employees are provided an opportunity to challenge the results of this calculation if they believe the calculation was made in error. In instances in which a candidate believes an error was made in calculating points, he or she must file a Point Calculation Request for Review to Human Resources within 60 days, and the College must review and respond with its decision within 14 days. The candidate then has the right to appeal the decision by submitting a Classification Appeal Form to the MCCC no later than ten days of receipt of the Human Resource office decision. Ultimately, a statewide 8-member Classification Appeals Committee, which includes representatives from the Board of Higher Education, MCCC and the Council of Presidents, determines a final and binding decision on the appeal (DAY CBA, Article XXI).

Compensation and benefits for adjunct faculty are detailed in the DCE CBA (Article XIV). Salary is determined on a per-credit basis, with a separate ratio for labs. Faculty are compensated based on their "step" classification (there are a total of 4 steps, and faculty move to higher step classifications based on the number of courses taught, as well as seniority). While most faculty begin at Step 1, the college may hire a faculty member at step 2 or 3, depending on his/her degrees, experience and qualifications.

The responsibilities of faculty and other members of the instructional team are defined within the CBAs (DAY CBA, 12.03 and 12.04; DCE CBA Article XIII). While the faculty recruitment process is determined by each community college in the Massachusetts system, the CBAs outline criteria for appointment (DAY CBA, 11.01; DCE CBA Article X), retention (DAY CBA, 11.02; DCE CBA Article X), evaluation (DAY CBA, 13.02 and 13.03; DCE CBA Article XI), promotion (DAY CBA, Article XIV; DCE CBA 14.05), tenure (DAY CBA, 11.03), and resolution of grievances (DAY CBA, Article X; DCE CBA Article VII).

A statement of expectations to ensure that faculty act responsibly and ethically, observe the established conditions of their employment, and otherwise function in a manner consistent with the mission and purposes of the institution is included in the Code of Conduct section of the STCC Employee Policies publication (p. 24). As employees of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, all STCC employees are subject to the Conflict of Interest Law (MA General Laws Chapter 268A). A summary of the law is also included in the STCC Employee Policies publication (p.4), as well as on the STCCNET portal, and STCC employees are annually required to acknowledge receipt of the summary of this law, as well as their intent to read and comply with it.

Academic freedom is defined and promulgated in both CBAs (DAY CBA, 7.01; DCE CBA, 6.01) as “the right of scholars in institutions of higher education freely to study, discuss, investigate, teach, exhibit, perform and publish…[and] in its teaching aspect is fundamental for
the protection of the rights of the teacher and of the student to freedom in learning.” When asked in a November 2019 *Standard Six Survey* of all college faculty (SSSF) “to what extent do you feel your academic freedom is protected at STCC?” 73% of the 88 respondents responded affirmatively; 12% were neutral; and 15% responded that there was limited, or no, protection. Among those concerned about academic freedom protections, the following items were cited as concerns: departmental efforts to adopt common textbooks and grading policies; perceived pressure to teach in a particular modality (eg, flipped classroom); or fear that online learning platforms would subject faculty to unauthorized access to their classrooms by administration.

The CBAs detail how faculty are to be evaluated to ensure that they are effectively carrying out their assigned responsibilities. There is a distinct procedure for each area of faculty workload. These responsibilities include the areas of classroom instruction, academic advising, and college service. Department Chairs review course syllabi, while Assistant Deans and Deans observe faculty in classrooms as well as review mandatory forms documenting college service and advising. Evaluation of faculty includes requiring documentation of college service completed each semester. The Human Resources Office is responsible for timely and accurate distribution and use of all faculty related evaluation tools. They also maintain each employee file where completed employment related documents and evaluations are housed.

The Academic Deans regularly reappraise faculty assignments and workloads, which are determined anew each semester. Faculty covered under the DAY CBA provide an advisory notice to their Dean each term, including the courses they seek to teach, as well as the faculty member’s preferred schedule. The Dean subsequently notifies faculty members in writing of their tentative class schedule (DAY CBA, 12.02). In some cases (especially in departments with one or two faculty, and/or in departments that hold external accreditation which dictates the specific licenses and credentials that must be held by faculty teaching specific courses), assignments remain fairly static. However, especially in service departments, efforts are made to rotate faculty in upper-level courses once the demand for particular courses has been established by the Dean.

Professional development (PD) opportunities for faculty and academic staff are abundant at STCC. Primary funding for these activities has been provided through Federal Department of Education grants such as Title III *Strengthening the Institution* ($112,000 in Grant Year 2019, ending September 2019) and *HSI-STEM* ($46,000 in Grant Year 2019, ending September 2019). In Fiscal Year 2019, $24,000 was allocated to PD activities through the Academic Affairs budget, and an additional $20,000 earmarked in the School of Health and Patient Simulation budget for PD required for continued licensing and credentialing of faculty and staff in allied health disciplines.

When asked, in the SSSF, how they remain current in the theories, knowledge, skills and pedagogy of their disciplines, most faculty respondents reported that they regularly read journals and professional literature. Many faculty reported that they also work in industry, which helps them stay current in their fields. Many others travel to professional conferences and seminars, and participate in professional organizations. In addition to these faculty-initiated activities, the College offers PD programming to faculty and staff. Recent programming has revolved around several themes: *cultural competence* (culturally responsive teaching and learning; community-building; anti-racism and unconscious bias; participatory action research; equity and inclusion; cross-generational communication); *pedagogy and course design* (flipped classrooms; universal design for learning; backward design; online course design; best practices in group work;
designing course activities; working effectively with a wide range of student skills and abilities); and advising (FERPA; best practices in advising; transfer opportunities for students). As of December 2020, 83% of the 257 faculty (full-time and adjunct) teaching Fall 2020 classes had participated in College-sponsored PD activities in the past 2 years. Of particular note are extended experiences such as the ESCALA HSI Summer Institute, for faculty of HSI institutions. Following the Institute, 20 (of 27) STCC faculty have pursued a Certificate of College Teaching & Learning in HSIs, a 27- hour program designed by ESCALA that includes not only the Summer Institute but also the design of a teaching research project (course redesign), individualized coaching support in the fall, and “teach back” presentations.

In Spring of 2020, a group of faculty created the Faculty Pedagogy Group, whose mission is to “promote the collaboration and sharing of educational ideas, teaching philosophies, learning styles and course pedagogy among all tenured and tenure-track faculty members who teach in a ‘live’ classroom environment, regardless of academic discipline.” As part of a “voluntary…body dedicated to the meaningful exchange of scholarly information and practices within a friendly and open atmosphere,” the participating faculty “hope to enhance our own teaching abilities within the classroom while continuing to deliver on our institutional mission of ‘supporting students and transforming lives’. In the midst of the Spring 2020 COVID-19 crisis, this group became a particularly important support group for the members as it moved to virtual meetings, which focused primarily on the challenges and success stories of various faculty members as they navigated their courses from 'live' to 'remote' formats, as well as a host of technical training tips from the instructional designers, as well as the learning management system administrator.

On the SSSF, 85% of responding faculty reported that they use a wide variety of new and/or experimental methods in their classrooms. Faculty noted implementing a mixture of digital tools and technology for students to engage in collaboration, polling, researching, presenting, gaming, writing, sharing, problem-solving, flipping classrooms, and small and large group and hands-on activities. As examples, these included open educational resources, web conferencing tools, and other subject-specific computerized technologies (e.g., dentistry). Faculty report using an array of curriculum and approaches to delivery of content presenting materials in literature, case studies, workshops, interactive lectures, and textbook materials introducing and changing the classroom dynamics, of lecture, to being more interactive.

Teaching and Learning: In the SSSF, when asked “Have your instructional techniques and modalities evolved to more effectively to serve your students?” 98% of respondents answered affirmatively. When describing how instructional techniques and methods have evolved, faculty responses were themed into concepts of methodologies, tools and techniques, professional development, and implementing a variety of actives to better serve students. Drilling down further faculty reported how they adapt to meet student needs, employing cultural competencies and scaffolding material to better integrate conceptual links between disparate topics. The campus learning management system is the primary structure many faculty employ to deliver learning content, accept assignments and grade student work. Faculty mentioned attending professional development opportunities both on campus and off that allowed them to be more confident in what they do and bring their learning into the classroom. Faculty also described a multitude of activities they bring into their teaching including field trips, guest speakers, simulations, employing technology and digital tools, and incorporating current events and media into the classroom curriculum.
On the SSSF, 80% of responding faculty reported that they measure the effectiveness of their instructional techniques and modalities in helping students achieve the learning goals that have been set for their classes. These faculty employ a wide number of instructional techniques and modalities in the classroom, including Process Oriented Guided Inquiry Learning (POGIL); Supplemental Instruction (SI); multimodal learning approaches; scaffolding low-stake activities and homework prior to higher stakes assessments; supporting intentional reflection through journal assignments, rubrics, and peer and faculty feedback; measuring progress in multiple ways to allow students maximum latitude in demonstrating mastery; and providing regular practice and opportunities for reinforcing critical thinking skills. In lab and clinical instruction, our faculty cite kinetic “learn, do, teach” approaches as particularly effective in helping students master skills and demonstrate competency.

When asked if faculty were encouraged within their departments or schools to experiment with new teaching techniques, 86% of the faculty respondents answered affirmatively, suggesting campus-wide support. 85% of the respondents indicated that they had in fact implemented new teaching techniques in their courses, citing "flipped" classrooms, Open Educational Resources (OER), problem-based learning, collaboration with other academic disciplines, and case-studies. Technology-based techniques are particularly prevalent among experimenting faculty, especially the incorporation of video, collaboration tools such as Blackboard, document cameras, "plickers" (smartphone-based polling tools), simulation software, screencasting, and academic software.

In Academic Year 2018/19, courses were offered in 45 academic departments. In 42 of the departments, a combination of factors (such as student enrollment, faculty/student ratios, and the offering of courses in summer, winter, evenings, weekends and/or online) necessitated the offering of DCE courses. In almost all of these departments, full-time faculty were hired to teach DCE courses. More than half of the departments employed full-time faculty to teach more 50% or more of the DCE offerings. In a number of departments, full-time faculty exclusively taught the DCE sections. These departments were in STEM and Health areas, and included Automotive Technology, Biomedical Engineering Technology, Cosmetology, Dental Hygiene, Diagnostic Medical Imaging, Engineering, Health Information Technology, Landscape Design and Management Technology, Respiratory Care, and Surgical Technology.

A number of academic departments, especially in general education disciplines, offer courses specifically as service courses to academic programs. These departments tend to offer a large number of course sections, and rely more on an adjunct pool for their DCE offerings. For example, the English department offered 395 sections of DCE courses in fiscal years 2019 and 2020, but only 18% of the sections were taught by its full-time faculty. The Biology Department employed full-time faculty to teach 29% of its 408 DCE sections. And the Math Department, which relies more heavily on full-time faculty (including some outside of their department) to teach DCE sections, assigned full-timers to 62% of its 291 DCE sections.

Student learning outcomes (SLOs) are determined by each faculty member, and are a contractually-required component of the syllabus for faculty covered in the DAY CBA (13.02B2). However, as affirmed in the contractual “Principles Statement on Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment” (DAY CBA, Appendix A), SLOs are “faculty-driven” and the faculty have academic freedom in determining the scope and content of their SLOs. As such, learning outcomes are not necessarily consistent across multiple sections of the same course. Faculty in some academic departments (Math and Business, for example) have collaboratively
developed—and adopted—common SLOs to support scaffolding of learning in their programs, as well as to facilitate learning outcome assessment measures. In the School of Health and Patient Simulation, SLOs are common across all sections of every course, as the SLOs are in most cases determined by accrediting bodies. (This challenge is further discussed in Standard 8, which contains a projection about the College’s commitment to addressing the lack of common SLOs within the parameters of the CBAs.)

As a community college, STCC is primarily a teaching institution. However, a number of our faculty are engaged in scholarly study and research to maintain currency and expertise in their disciplines, as well as in effective educational practices. Similarly, our faculty design opportunities for students to engage in research and creative work as part of their academic work. In the SSSF, 77% of the responding faculty who requested resources to support such activities within the past three years reported that they received adequate resources. The activities cited by faculty constituted field trips, conferences, programmatic accreditation training, museum visits, visits to student clubs and classrooms by industry professionals, and classroom-based research on the effectiveness of instructional strategies. Additionally, in the same three-year period, 2 sabbaticals were provided to faculty to conduct study in development of OER resources for digital media students, as well as the study of fuel cell technology to be incorporated into a Physics of Green Energy course. Faculty in the physics, engineering and information technologies disciplines are involved with several National Science Foundation research programs, including opportunities for students to participate in research (through the Research Experiences for Undergraduates program) at UMASS Amherst in wind energy and autonomous materials physics; a Collaborative Research project that uses cutting-edge pedagogy—Imaginative Education and transmedia—to create story-based design learning environments that motivate children to learn, apply, and integrate engineering concepts; an Advanced Technological Education project to develop (and bring to the classroom) real-world advanced photonics manufacturing industry problems; an Advanced Technical Education project to develop and disseminate to STEM educators learning materials about the “Internet of Things;” and a Collaborative Research project that provides undergraduate IT students hands-on data science experiences by working on teams deployed to community organizations to help them “wrangle, analyze, and visualize” their data, while developing the capacity of community college faculty to teach data science at their institutions.

Academic advising is made available to all students at the College. The DAY CBA includes advising as part of a full-time faculty member’s workload, specifying a caseload of 18 advisees per semester. Additionally, advising is provided by professional staff employed in Student Affairs’ Advising and Transfer Center or TRIO Student Support Services office. Students who are matriculated into degree and certificate programs and who are enrolled in at least one daytime onsite class are assigned to either a faculty or professional staff member (during the COVID-19 pandemic, the onsite class criteria is being waived, and being reconsidered altogether). In the School of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies, all first-time freshman are assigned to professional staff for their first year, after which the students are transitioned to faculty. In the Schools of Health and Patient Simulation and STEM, faculty serve as advisors to all day students in their programs from their first semester through completion. All efforts are made to ensure that students are assigned to advisors who have knowledge and expertise in the academic discipline of their advisees. Until very recently (Fall 2020), nonmatriculated students, as well as those who attended exclusively during the evening, weekends, or online, were not assigned to individual advisors, but were made aware of advising services available to them in
the Advising and Transfer Center. This approach has been altered due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which required most students to enroll in online instruction. Students are encouraged to make appointments to see an advisor, but online Chat options are also available for these students. When registering for a subsequent term, all students assigned to an advisor must meet or confer with their advisor before being granted permission to register. Students who are not assigned to an advisor are not subject to this requirement.

Students in the College’s two 100% online programs (Business Administration and Business Transfer) are assigned to a Business Department professor as their advisor. The professor uses a two-pronged approach to communicate with, and assist, her advisees. This approach included the development/updating of each student’s educational plan on WebAdvisor, as well as opportunities for the students to make phone or videoconference advising appointments. Through these communication tools, the advisor attempts to replicate the interactions of a face-to-face advising appointment, and in so doing facilitates each student’s sense of connection to the college community. Whether via email, telephone or video, the advisor engages the student in thoughtful conversation, discussing the whole student – past, present and future. When a student expresses distress with course work, she discusses options and strategies for success. The advisor attempts to anticipate the student’s needs with exchanges about work and family obligations, etc., developing a positive relationship and instilling confidence that she is competent and able to deal with any issues the student may have.

Supporting the work of the faculty are professional staff (covered under the DAY CBA) who serve as instructional designers, librarians and academic advisors. In Fall 2018, two instructional designers were hired to support faculty in the development of online classes (prior to this, the College had offered only sporadic support to faculty in this area); in Fall 2020, in response to the College’s greater demand for online classes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, a third instructional designer was hired. The instructional designers staff the Center for Online and Digital Learning (CODL), whose mission is to create a culture of knowledgeable, ethical, competent and literate digital learners. CODL staff help faculty improve their pedagogical approach and increase their fluency with a variety of digital tools and resources that will improve their teaching, and their students’ learning. CODL staff support a number of initiatives, including: a comprehensive online course development program (which is required of faculty who wish to convert an onsite class to the online domain); screen capture and lecture technology; augmented and virtual reality technology; a Mobile Technologies Community Collaboration Project; bookclubs; shareouts; and one-on-one consultations with faculty.

All of the College’s professional librarians all hold Masters Degrees in Library Science, and the four full-time librarians each have an area of specialization (reference and information literacy; OER and health sciences; collection development; and systems). In addition to four full-time librarians, the college also employs two part-time librarians. The librarians are supported by paraprofessional staff (covered under the AFSCME CBA), including an Access Services Manager, a Library Assistant, and a Copy Cataloger, who are responsible for all duties related to access services, technical services, and cataloguing. Prior to COVID-19, the library also employed three non-union affiliated lab monitors who assisted students with printing, document formatting, and the use of Microsoft Documents and Google tools. The library is open from Monday through Friday, 7:30am-7:00pm (during the COVID-19 pandemic, library services have moved online but remain available during normal hours of operation). In addition to providing access to resources and collections, the librarians offer regular information literacy sessions.
(approximately 80 per semester), citation workshops for APA and MLA citation styles, and TechTalks with information about using Google Docs. Faculty can bring their students in for classes that are designed specifically for their classes. Librarians also travel to classrooms to provide library instruction in addition to offering drop-in and scheduled one on one information literacy sessions. They also create custom "playlists" of video tutorials for faculty to provide to their classes, as well as custom research guides and pathfinders for faculty to help with individual classes and/or assignments. Library staff also have a Digital Learning Object (DLO) working group that creates short video tutorials for all aspects of research, citation styles, printing, and paper formatting. These tutorials are available 24/7 on the library's YouTube channel. The DLO team works closely with CODL staff and the Office of Disability Services to ensure that the tutorials are accessible to the entire campus community.

Academic advisors comprise the staff of the College’s Advising and Transfer Center (ATC), which is under the auspices of Student Affairs. The mission of the ATC is to provide continuous support to strengthen, nurture, empower, and assist students in making informed decisions that will guide their educational experience at STCC. The academic advisors work with students to design educational plans that will lead students to accomplishing their personal, career, and academic goals, whether that entails transferring to a four year college or University, or completing a program of study that leads directly to employment in a career. Each member of the advising staff supports a caseload of advisees, while also assisting students who seek assistance on a drop-in (or virtual) basis. The advisors also conduct career exploration and goal clarification activities with students, liaison with faculty to remain current in their understanding of the College’s academic programs, and develop and facilitate workshops for faculty on a wide range of advising topics to ensure consistency and quality in advising practices.

Appraisal

Faculty and Academic Staff: There is perhaps no more telling illustration of the commitment, skill and flexibility of STCC’s faculty and academic staff than their response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The rapid onslaught of the pandemic in March 2020 required the College’s faculty to quickly bring all instruction into a remote learning modality, with only two weeks’ notice (an extended Spring Break). During this time, two instructional designers, assisted by IT and library staff, led efforts to plan and provide emergency training (both in-person and remotely, as well as synchronously and asynchronously) in remote teaching tools such as Blackboard, Google Suite, Zoom, Jamboard and ScreencastOmatic. Over 90 faculty participated in these trainings, and in quick order, 262 faculty converted 901 sections (or 86%) of in-process onsite Spring classes to a remote learning format and taught their courses to completion by the scheduled end of term. Courses which were unable to convert to remote learning (mostly clinicals and labs, and all in the allied health disciplines) were put “on hold” until they could be resumed in summer and fall. As a result of the dedication and actions of the faculty, not a single course was cancelled because of the pandemic. In preparation for a Fall 2020 term in which all classes would be taught online except for a limited number of hands-on labs in the technologies and health science areas, 165 faculty completed training in online course development. Half of the faculty who taught online courses in the Fall did so for the first time at STCC. To prepare for this transition they underwent a formal online development training program (ODP) led by instructional designers from the recently-created CODL. The ODP was instituted in 2018, and completion of the program became an administrative requirement in 2020 for all faculty who wished to teach a course online for the first time. In the ODP, faculty learn best practices for online instruction (including the
importance of online discussions to promote student engagement), complete a guided, facilitated self-paced course (which is taught online), and develop a course with regular assistance from a designated instructional designer. However, many faculty (those who taught online prior to Fall 2020) were “grandfathered” from this requirement and therefore have been expected to keep their online courses technologically and pedagogically current without the benefit of CODL support in the form of structured training program. Building a culture of “course refresh,” as well as developing a contractual agreement about how course refresh work can be compensated, will ensure that the quality of online courses offered by the College will be as strong in Fall 2025 as it is in Fall 2020.

While professional development opportunities are abundant at STCC and individuals are free to identify areas of interest and activities/workshops they wish to pursue and seek funding from their Dean, the College is heavily reliant on grant funds to pay for these activities. While the hiring of instructional designers has addressed a long-standing need for online education support (and the support of these staff was critical for most all faculty during the COVID-19 crisis), many faculty express a desire for more support for face-to-face instruction. Also, a lack of consistency in how professional development funds are requested and prioritized throughout the College can be a deterrence for faculty and academic staff who wish to avail themselves of opportunities (there is currently no college wide-process in place for faculty to request funding for, or participation in, professional development opportunities). Also, the impact of professional development activities isn’t always clear; and the broader impact of an individual’s professional development is limited when opportunities for sharing with colleagues what was learned at a conference or training aren’t offered in a formal way. Responses to a question about professional development in the SSSF reveal that many faculty see the College’s Professional Days (provisioned in the DAY CBA, 12.03.D.6), as wasted opportunities to focus on professional development. In the SSSF, faculty expressed a strong wish that faculty be involved in setting the agenda for Professional days, including the selection of a keynote speaker, workshop topics, etc.

It has been a challenge for STCC to recruit diverse faculty, particularly those in technical and professional programs, such as STEM and healthcare, given the salary parameters of the DAY CBA. While HR screens applicant pools for qualified minority candidates, the lack of qualified candidates in the pool does not necessarily result in a reposting of the position due to staffing needs (although postings are frequently extended beyond the contractual minimum 14 day period when few qualified candidates are in the pool). While the DAY CBA prescribes salary ranges within which the College has little flexibility, the College could be more intentional about the ways in which it attempts to meet its goals for diversifying its academic staff. For example, job ads could be written more inclusively to better convey the College’s value for diversity and its equity mission. Recruitment approaches could be enhanced by what the EAB refers to as “Upstream Recruitment” initiatives (Instilling Equity and Inclusion in Departmental Practices, 2017, in workroom), which include engaging current faculty to: help build a pipeline of prospective candidates through their engagement in professional organizations and conferences; develop referral relationships with graduate students; and offer on-campus professional development opportunities for prospects to further engage prospects with the College.

While a Hiring Manager Guide provides guidance for search committees, the basis by which job candidates are screened in the pre-interview phase is not standardized and may be subject to bias (for example, some Chairs work with committees to develop/implement rubrics, while some do not). Some committees conduct abbreviated (15 minute) phone interviews with only a Chair
asking questions, while other committees conduct 45+ minute interviews with 15-20 interview questions asked by all members of the committee. These inconsistencies may have a negative impact on the College’s efforts to thoroughly screen (and effectively attract) potential candidates. The College could provide more support for preparing search committee members to conduct effective searches, including implicit bias training.

**Teaching and Learning:** The College’s full-time faculty currently (Fall 2020) teach 47% of the College’s course sections as part of their contractual workload. The College also relies heavily on its full-time faculty to teach the remaining course sections (in an adjunct role as covered under the provisions of the DCE CBA), assigning them to 39% of those sections in Fall 2020. As noted above, in some instances, full-time faculty cover all adjunct sections in smaller departments, and considerable numbers of them in some larger departments. While it could be argued that students potentially have greater access to their instructors if their instructors are full-time faculty whose main work commitment is to STCC and who hold office hours contractually required under the DAY CBA, the overreliance on full-time faculty to teach beyond their full-time workloads makes the College particularly vulnerable when faculty members become ill or if they are unable or unwilling to take on additional classes in a particular term. The further development of a qualified adjunct pool would help to remedy this challenge, while ensuring that students have exposure to different academic strengths and viewpoints.

In the College’s most recent administration (in 2017) of the *Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE)*, most student respondents considered academic advising/planning to be "very important" to them, and 91% of respondents said they were either "somewhat satisfied" or "very satisfied' with the academic advising/planning services that were available here at STCC. 86% of all STCC students surveyed indicated that they had met (either in person or on line) with an academic advisor before registering for some or all of their classes each term. Lastly, when compared to other community colleges across the US, and in the opinions of STCC students as compared to the opinions of other community college students at that time, STCC fared better than other community colleges overall in terms of students meeting with the same academic advisor, on a regular basis, and with plans for subsequent advising sessions. That said, due to workload requirements and faculty and staff/ratios, the College has not until recently (Fall 2020) assigned an individual advisor to each matriculated student. Students enrolled exclusively in evening, weekend and/or online classes (with the exception of students in the online Business programs) have been provided advising services by the ATC. Thus, these students may meet with different staff throughout their educational journey and may not develop the same working relationship that they might with an assigned advisor. A review of recent (April 2020) enrollment data revealed that the unassigned evening/online students were less likely (by 20 percentage points) than students with assigned advisors to register for classes during the priority registration period for returning students. During COVID-19, the ATC has increased their caseloads to accommodate all students and assign each student an academic advisor; however the lack of educational planning tools, combined with the virtual environment in which advisors needed to operate, presented challenges for the advisors in meeting with each of their advisees. Technological solutions can and should be implemented and leveraged to help address academic advising challenges going forward.

While COVID-19 created numerous access challenges, student, faculty, and staff use of the library remained heavy and consistent both during the transition to remote learning and later in the library’s more sustained online approach. Since the library transitioned to a remote delivery
of services model, web traffic for library resources is up 40%. Additionally, the library migrated from the Central and Western Massachusetts Resource Sharing library network to the Higher Education Libraries of Massachusetts library network in Spring of 2020, increasing academic resources available to students considerably while removing the burden of “public library” consortial sharing from the college.

### Projection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Projection Detail</th>
<th>Est. Time of Completion</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Center for Online and Digital Learning (CODL) and Distance Education Committee</td>
<td>Develop a “course refresh” training program based on best practices that will guide faculty in updating their online and hybrid courses to promote quality instruction by ensuring currency, intentionality and effectiveness in design and in pedagogical approaches.</td>
<td>Summer 2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>CODL and faculty</td>
<td>Conduct Course Refresh training, supported by faculty incentives negotiated by College administration and the STCCPA.</td>
<td>Ongoing, beginning in Academic Year 2021-22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faculty Professional Development Coordinator (to be appointed)</td>
<td>Coordinate professional development (PD) opportunities, and plan programming in concert with a faculty PD committee.</td>
<td>Academic Year 2022/23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resources, Academic Affairs and Student Affairs</td>
<td>Develop a standard process for requesting funds for professional development</td>
<td>Summer 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resources</td>
<td>Leverage the results of a 2021 campus wide equity audit to ensure recruitment and hiring practices are effective, consistent, equitable and serve to enhance the diversity of staff and faculty.</td>
<td>Academic Year 2021/22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resources and Antiracism &amp; Inclusion Alliance</td>
<td>Increase the pool of adjuncts through concerted recruitment efforts.</td>
<td>Academic Year 2021/22 and ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Affairs, Student Affairs and Information Technology</td>
<td>Implement a student educational planning software solution</td>
<td>Academic Year 2021/22</td>
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Standard Seven: Institutional Resources

Description

STCC draws on significant resources to fulfill its mission as an accessible and affordable technical community college. Despite challenging headwinds pre-COVID-19, including substantial enrollment declines, the institution has substantial human, financial, IT, physical, and equipment/technological resources upon which to draw in order to ensure strong support for teaching, learning, and students. Further examination of financial resources is discussed in this chapter, including state support from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, as are the areas of human capital, physical and technological resources. In each of these areas, STCC demonstrates a sufficiency, albeit there are constraints to be considered. Overall, STCC is financially stable, and this is evidenced by its very modest debt position, as well as its balanced budget, even during the uncertain fiscal and societal challenges presented by the pandemic.

Human Resources: As of September 2020, STCC had approximately 741 active employees across the organization, consisting of about 240 full-time staff, approximately 118 full-time faculty, 262 part-time staff, and approximately 121 part-time adjunct faculty. All new employees are provided with college policies and benefit information by way of onboarding through the Office of Human Resources/Employee Benefits & Operations Center (HR/EBOC). Those hired into unions—STCC has three collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) with chapters of two unions—are given access to the CBAs relative to their employment (Massachusetts Community College Council MCCC Day or DCE contract; or an American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees contract). Exempt employees, referred to as “non-unit professionals” (or NUPs) are provided the statewide Non-Unit Professional Personnel Policies Handbook. Each of these resources include information about terms of employment and procedures for evaluation and promotion specific to their respective positions. Organizational charts are available on the employee portal (STCCNet) and were last updated in Fall 2020.

HR/EBOC coordinates employee recruitment, affirmative action, onboarding, Workers’ Compensation, workplace accommodations, benefit enrollment and changes, retirement information, compensation, the Human Resources Compensation Management System (HRCMS) for time reporting, Title IX coordination, and other general human resource activities. The office is led by an assistant vice president of human resources, a position that was created in 2020 to replace a senior director-level position, and which reports directly to the president. A grant-supported position funded by a federal Violence Against Women Campus Safety Grant, supports employee training and professional development.

As part of the hiring process, job descriptions are prepared, or existing job descriptions with appropriate classification specifications are used, to detail the qualifications necessary for each position. Faculty and staff play important roles specific to the recruitment process and participate in the search process for new employees. The hiring process is standardized, in that job qualifications for each position are examined; a broadly representative committee is formed (primarily for full-time positions), and an interview component is included. Finalists for senior administrator positions are typically asked to participate in additional forums, which include stakeholders, as part of the vetting process (specific examples of this include the most recent Fall
2020 hiring of a CFO, and the Spring 2020 hiring of a Vice President of Student Affairs prior to that).

A directory of job descriptions at the management level position and higher was created in Summer 2020 to review Student Affairs, Facilities, Human Resources and Information Technology personnel; this library totals 117 job descriptions. The College’s hiring processes ensure that it has sufficiently qualified staff, who meet the minimum educational requirements of each position and possess the experience necessary to carry out the responsibilities as reflected in the job description (hiring practices for faculty are described in greater detail in Standard 6). Compensation for unionized employees is bargained at the statewide level and prescribed in the CBAs, while local efforts to provide systemic review of NUP salaries (as well as equity adjustments when indicated) have been made over the past three years to support administrator retention, as well as market competitiveness. Employees hired into grant-funded positions are sent annual letters notifying them that their ongoing employment is contingent upon continued grant funding. Ongoing and annual evaluation is dictated by the individual CBAs for each union member, and by the BHE’s Non-Unit Professional Personnel Policies Handbook for all NUPs.

Learning and professional development opportunities are available to faculty and staff through many avenues. Professional days, held twice each year, focus on opportunities for learning or promotion of college initiatives (for example, assessment, cultural competency, or accreditation). Departments may build specific training or development opportunities into their budgets which relate to their area of expertise. The Center for Online and Digital Learning (CODL) provides opportunities for online pedagogy-focused learning that may include webinars, book clubs, and one-on-one training. (See Standard 6 for more information about professional development for faculty.)

**Financial Resources:** The institution's financial resources carry a strong emphasis on academic and student support efforts, in addition to a compelling need to focus on facilities and infrastructure. The chart below represents the dollars and percentage (by fiscal year) of total expenses related to instruction and academic support; the second entry couples those expenses with Student Services expenses and Scholarships to represent total spending for academic and student support.

<table>
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<th>FY2018</th>
<th>FY2019</th>
<th>FY2020</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instruction &amp; Academic Support</td>
<td>$30,951K (44%)</td>
<td>$31,712K (44%)</td>
<td>$30,277K (44%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instruction, Academic Support, Student Services and Scholarship</td>
<td>$46,406K (67%)</td>
<td>$46,815K (65%)</td>
<td>$40,300K (59%)</td>
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Approximately 64% of the FY2021 operating budget is dedicated to personnel. Specific to capacity and resources, annually STCC has allocated $3.1 million in operating funds to campus facilities/deferred maintenance projects. This is over and above monies from the Commonwealth’s Division of Capital Asset, Management & Maintenance (DCAMM), which will be discussed further. The college spends in excess of $1 million on police and dispatch
services and campus safety annually; and, in combination with funding provided by the STCC Foundation, STCC annually distributes approximately $1 million in institutional aid to students over and above federal and state financial aid sources.

Fiscal year 2020 revenues exceeded expenses by $3,112,409. This was related to revenues exceeding budgeted amounts in the areas of state funding, Trust Fund revenues, and Miscellaneous revenues. Expenses lower than budgeted also impacted this net position largely due to Operations and Utilities budget impacted by remote operations (-$1,074M) and deferred facilities projects (-$1,062M).

As discussed in greater detail in Standard 2, the Board of Trustees (BOT), given its fiduciary responsibility, approves final college budgets. Administrators present to the BOT draft budgets and assumptions at multiple monthly meetings, often seeking final approval in May, but allowing for a June meeting should the need arise (this was the case when the FY 2021 budget was being considered). Throughout the fiscal year, revenue and spending reports (presented monthly at meetings of the BOT’s Ways & Means subcommittee) are updated regularly based on changes in enrollment projections, new or expired grants, changes in salary/wage projections as well as any emergency purchases that need to be made. An Investment Subcommittee of the Ways & Means Subcommittee also meets quarterly to examine investments and reserves/unrestricted net funds.

The College’s Administration and Finance department includes the positions of CFO/Vice President, Controller, Assistant Controller, and Senior Director of Finance and Budgets. These full-time staff bring to their positions approximately 70 years of financial experience in Higher Education. This created a solid foundation of knowledge of STCC financial matters at the ground level on which to build and further their respective financial careers. In addition to formal education, the financial staff have a diverse span of experience, including in the areas of government audits, risk management, finance, banking and real estate. This diversity adds to the richness of the collective financial background of the staff. (Also reporting to the CFO—and significantly involved with institutional resource allocation planning efforts—are the Senior Director of Facilities, Chief of Police, and Dean of Student Financial Services).

The college is audited annually for the federal financial aid funds that it receives, and every three years for the state financial aid funds that it receives; all audit results and findings are presented to the BOT. Internally, the college continues to ensure appropriate control mechanisms for all financial transactions including procurement and payroll expenditures. These control mechanisms involve appropriate signatures of department chairs, deans, vice-presidents, and the president (purchases charged to “Procards,” or college credit cards, are an exception, but a reconciliation process is in place and is overseen by the business office). All expenditures are processed against the college’s internal budget system. These internal control mechanisms are also reviewed on an annual basis by O’Connor and Drew, P.C., the college’s auditors, as well as the Massachusetts Office of the State Auditor. These established processes have enabled the college to undertake overall sound financial decision-making, which has for years resulted in a stable financial standing.

More internal safeguards at STCC to ensure the ethical and prudent management of its finances, budget process, and timely financial process include the following:

- Internal Control Document that outlines the internal control objectives, the policy and the procedures of the main areas of Administrative. Services: Revenue and Receipts, Billing
& Receivables, Purchasing, Expenditures, Travel, Accounts Payable, and Payroll. Internal controls are in place to ensure the integrity of the accounting information and to assist in the prevention of fraud.

- Limited number of authorized signers who must be approved by the president of the college. A record is kept of the list of designated signers and is updated at the beginning of every fiscal year as of July 1.
- Limited number of individuals who have administrative rights to bank accounts.
- Offices and confidential information are kept securely locked when left unattended.
- Separation of duties to prevent fraud and error: e.g., a supervisor reviews the accounts payable warrant before checks are cut; the employee who prepares deposits & cuts checks does not reconcile the bank account.
- Extensive budgeting process whereby financial resources are allocated to align with STCC’s mission and goals. Financial goals are communicated among departments, Vice Presidents and Administrative Services during the preparation of the budget. Budget-to-actual reports are prepared to track progress.
- Financial information is presented to the BOT on a regular basis.
- Employee policies on fraud prevention, ProCard program, purchasing, contracts, and travel are made available on STCCNet

Every year, a draft fee schedule is reviewed by college administrators with the BOT, which has the sole authority to set student fees, as well as tuition rates for non-state supported courses (i.e., those covered under the MCCC DCE Collective Bargaining Agreement). Careful consideration is given to the impact on students, particularly Pell-eligible students, and the goal is to keep any fee increase under the “Pell Threshold” so that a full-time student receiving a maximum Pell award would not have unmet need. Other specific program/course/program-specific fees are examined and considered, particularly in light of the need for fee revenue with respect to managing the college’s fiscal health with declining enrollments. When, for example, the College launched a Health Science program in 2018, the administration recommended to the BOT that Health Science students not be required to pay a program-specific “health programs” fee, since their coursework involved far fewer clinical experiences, and was thus less expensive to run than clinical health programs such as nursing or dental hygiene. Rather, administration suggested that students in this program should be charged a course-specific fee only for those courses that required use of the patient simulation center. Similarly, in 2019, a course-specific fee was added to a psychology field practicum course to cover the added costs (including drug testing, etc.) of administering this course. Both of these course-specific fees were approved by the BOT, and the fees are reassessed annually to ensure they are fair and sufficient.

The college has a quasi-endowment, referred to colloquially as “reserves” by administrators and trustees. This “unrestricted net position” has been available for emergencies, special projects and unique campus needs. Examples of BOT approval of use of reserves include: $3 million in 2016 for the $50 million Rubenzahl Student Learning Commons building project; $420,000 in 2018 for a failed network core switch; and $50,000 in 2019 to hire a value stream mapping consultant (although funds for the latter were ultimately not withdrawn because the college had adequate resources to fund the consultancy). As of June 2020, reserves were at $10.2 million and they, along with investments, are overseen by the BOT. The BOT has approved an investment policy, and an independent investment advisor (DiMeo Schneider dba Fiduciary Investment Advisors) is responsible for day-to-day oversight of the college’s investments. On a
regular basis, a BOT Investment Subcommittee convenes to review investments, portfolio performance, cash flow considerations related to long-term and short-term allocations, and how Trust Fund Guidelines promulgated by the Massachusetts Comptroller’s Office are being applied. Fiduciary Investment Advisors, LLC, began working with the college in 2015 as the investment manager; currently DiMeo Schneider took over management of the account, which was values at $15.9 Million as of June 30, 2020.

Grant funds are also a key source of support, including federal grants from Title III, HSI-STEM and TRIO programs, as well as others from federal, state and private sources. The table below shows the total grant funds in the past three fiscal years; these funds have supported initiatives that range from faculty training to supplemental instruction/peer tutoring and culturally-responsive initiatives. Additional grants were requested with significant capital investment to programs include funding towards the Robotics program of ($250,000), School of Health and Patient Simulation ($250,000), and Mechanical Engineering Technology ($250,000).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>Total Grant Funds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FY2018</td>
<td>$3,874,915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY2019</td>
<td>$4,418,470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY2020</td>
<td>$7,491,516 (includes $1.02M from CARES Act funds)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The STCC Foundation exists with the express intent of supporting the college and STCC students. A 501-(c)-3 non-profit organization, the Foundation has $3.9M under investment, with an annual dispersal of scholarships direct to students. The STCC Foundation also provides the college with an annual allocation to aid facilities/infrastructure (typically $100,000), as well as student scholarships that are bundled with college-specific aid (typically STCC supplies $750,000 annually, with the STCC Foundation supplying an amount in relation to their gifting). The two entities also partnered in 2018 to launch the first major gifts campaign in over a decade. As of Fall 2020, just over $2 million had been raised toward the goal of $3 million. This includes three bequests with a combined total of over $1M, 48 major donors with gifts over $500, and 338 other donors with various gift amounts.

**Information, Physical and Technological Resources:** Information technology (IT) is critical for the mission and its successful operations, and technology is needed to support the college goals and objectives. [The STCC IT Master Plan] provides a blueprint for achieving the vision of leveraging reliable and emerging technologies and information resources to support the mission of the college. The IT Master Plan focuses on four goals, their respective objectives, and key strategies. The IT Security Plan describes safeguards to protect the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of information technology resources.

Several infrastructure upgrades were completed during the past three years. Physical servers were migrated to a completely virtual environment on a VxRail platform which hosts 68 virtual servers and failover capability to a secondary rack across campus. File storage capacity has been expanded to accommodate increased usage and space requirements. The College network operates on Cisco technology, including switches, wireless, firewalls, VoIP, and messaging collaboration products. A new Cisco Core switch in the data center provides connectivity to 200 Cisco switches, 2 Cisco Wireless controllers, and 300+ wireless access points throughout campus. The main firewall is a new Cisco Firepower NGFW, which handles VPN connection for remote logins. Along with the more secure features, the campus is now able to support double
the internet bandwidth than in the past. A gigabit fiber optic network provided by the UMass network extends to all buildings on campus with 1Gbps wired connectivity to offices and classrooms, and a second 1Gbps public network is from Comcast.

Together with integrated firewall capabilities, security and network vulnerability is monitored on multiple levels including Tenable software and ESET enterprise anti-virus protection, which is centrally managed and distributed to all computers. Independent security audits are periodically performed to assess threats and risks. The college has added and updated many security policies and procedures during the past two years, and staff and faculty are required to formally agree to the acceptable use policy. In 2018, a PCI risk assessment was performed by Compass IT Compliance, LLC.

The College offers full-time faculty a Windows laptop or MacBook, and staff are provided with either a laptop or desktop computer. There are over 100 computer labs and classroom across campus, with an inventory of over 1800 devices. All computers are equipped with Microsoft Office, enterprise applications, or specialty software for the academic departments. Faculty and staff have remote access to the network, files shares, and enterprise applications via Cisco AnyConnect VPN. The College uses several cloud-based services including Google GSuite for Education, Blackboard Learning Management system, and an enterprise Zoom license. IT User Support Services provides technical services for students, faculty, and staff including account management, troubleshooting, computer upgrades and replacements, software imaging, peripherals, audio visual, and classroom support.

Enterprise applications include Ellucian’s Colleague student information system, Enrollment Rx, SharePoint portal, SAP Business Objects, and Tableau. Multifunction printing devices and “follow-me” printing capabilities are available in all buildings on campus, as well as connection to the ImageNow document imaging system. During the past year, STCC has upgraded portions of Colleague system’s web-based interface from WebAdvisor to Self-Service, including financial aid and online budgets and requisitions.

In order to better prepare, prevent, mitigate, respond to and recover from complex emergencies, the College has developed a Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP). The CEMP serves as a centralized guide to STCC for the development and implementation of a Campus-Wide Emergency Management Program. The CEMP describes the overall framework required for the integration and coordination of emergency management activities across all STCC operations in accordance with industry best practices and standards. The full CEMP is a secure document under Massachusetts General Law Chapter 4, Section 7 (26) (n).

STCC’s campus contains 23 structures, and over one million square feet of infrastructure, much of it historic. As such, the college must continually balance the demands of historic preservation with the sometimes-competing needs of its educational enterprise. For example, until 2017 the Campus Green was used for seasonal parking, leading to regular degradation of the topsoil, and concerns from the College’s National Park neighbors. STCC was able, in 2017, through a Memorandum of Understanding with the Armory National Historic Site (where exactly is the MOU? Must find it for Workroom) to build out additional on-campus parking (for the first time in decades). At a cost of $1.5 million, “K Lot,” proximate to the Pearl Street Campus Gate, has been a welcome addition with upwards of 130 new parking spaces, and has eliminated the need for parking on the Campus Green.
As discussed in Standard 2, a good deal of effort has been made in recent years to align planning with resource allocation. This is particularly evident as it relates to campus facilities/infrastructure and the $316 million in deferred maintenance needs. The table below shows the deferred maintenance needs (over a 10-year period, from 2017-2027) on the twenty-three campus structures. To illustrate the complexity of a historic campus, and resource allocation, consider Building 10, which has remained vacant for many years, but is proximate to the newly renovated Building 19, which now houses nearly all student supports and services. As the north of campus is now much more active, and intentionally planned as the focus of use, it places Building 10 at 5,700 square feet, in an even more precarious position. For this building, no study of its needs has been done, it runs the risk of further degradation, and it is likely that priorities will not allow for a costly restoration even though it is prominent, and its historic nature means demolition is untenable.

### Building Data and Deferred Maintenance (DM)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building Name</th>
<th>Year Built</th>
<th>Gross Square Feet (GSF)</th>
<th>10 year DM Needs $/Million</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building 1</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>178,000</td>
<td>$28.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building 5/6</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>11,700</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building 7</td>
<td>1933</td>
<td>2,810</td>
<td>$0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building 8</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>4,100</td>
<td>$0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building 9</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>4,100</td>
<td>$0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building 10</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>5,700</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building 11</td>
<td>1807/1863</td>
<td>14,600</td>
<td>$0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building 12</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>3,200</td>
<td>$1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building 13</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>95,500</td>
<td>$14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building 14</td>
<td>1930</td>
<td>27,500</td>
<td>$6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building 15</td>
<td>1836</td>
<td>31,900</td>
<td>$13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building 16</td>
<td>1917</td>
<td>74,000</td>
<td>$38.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building 17</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>197,600</td>
<td>$41.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building 19</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td>101,200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building 20</td>
<td>1941/1972</td>
<td>187,300</td>
<td>$48.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building 21</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>4,800</td>
<td>$0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building 25</td>
<td>1942</td>
<td>24,400</td>
<td>$6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building 27</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td>61,100</td>
<td>$35.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building 28</td>
<td>1919</td>
<td>48,600</td>
<td>$15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building 30</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>840</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building 31</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building 32</td>
<td>1941</td>
<td>34,400</td>
<td>$8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building 35</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>$1.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL** 1,072,615 SF $316 Million

A signature investment, derived from years of planning and advocacy, the *Ira H. Rubenzahl Student Learning Commons*/Building 19 project is a key example of investment in students, and student-facing services. Students can now access, under one roof, admissions, advising, financial aid, the registrar, tutoring, testing, the bookstore, and library resources. The library in partnership with IT has the ability to distribute in excess of 300 Chromebooks, 230 internet hotspots, and is open close to 60 hours a week including evenings and Saturdays (during the pandemic, all services are offered remotely). Professional librarians provide reference assistance during all operating hours, by phone, email, or face-to-face (qualifications and responsibilities of the library staff are described in Standard 6). Support for faculty and staff is provided through 120 *LibGuides*, developed and maintained by library staff in collaboration with faculty. The library staff play a key role in supporting students’ development of information literacy,
including teaching sessions in information literacy for various courses. These sessions prepare students to find, evaluate, and use information appropriately. Components include navigating library databases, conducting internet searches, evaluating information for bias, currency, relevance, etc., and proper citation standards. Courses that partook in these library sessions include those in English, Adult Basic Education, Psychology, and Health Sciences. Since the pandemic, demand for remote reference services has increased significantly, and library staff have generated a number of student-assist videos on a range of subjects.

Other significant recent capital and equipment investments have included:

- $250,000: via state grant, SIMs Medical Center (patient simulators and associated technology)
- $56,000: upgrade to campus greenhouse
- $250,000: via state grant, new equipment/technology for Electrical Engineering Technology Program
- $250,000: via state grant, new equipment/technology for Mechanical Engineering Technology Program

**Appraisal**

*Human Resources:* Despite the enrollment challenges and uncertainty of the COVID-19 crisis, the College continues to make significant employee investments continue to ensure it can fulfill its mission. In Fall 2020, faculty members were hired in Occupational Therapy, Computer Information Technology, Mechanical Engineering Technology, Energy Systems Technology, and Health Information Technology. Additionally, an Assistant Dean for the school of STEM was hired earlier in the year. Simultaneously, some faculty positions were retrenched due to budgetary pressures and elimination of programs that include Cosmetology, Automotive Technology, and Landscape Design and Management. The college continues to balance the needs of high demand programs along with other needs across the college. Other recent campus hires include a Vice President of Advancement and External Affairs, as well as a full-time Webmaster. Also, significant training investments were made in 2020, to prepare faculty for online teaching when most onsite instruction was curtailed due to the pandemic. During this time, 173 faculty were involved in training through our Center for Online and Digital Learning with total stipends exceeding $472K.

COVID-19 has created some unique struggles with our human capital, as it has for many employees during this pandemic. Burdens and pressures, coupled with the isolation of remote work can add to the stressors that impact employees and their productivity. To support employees during this time, the College could take a more intentional focus on well-being that takes a holistic approach including emotional and spiritual support, financial support, and health improvements.

*We also need to address the new section in 7.1: “the institution addresses its own goals for the achievement of diversity, equity, and inclusion among its personnel and assesses the effectiveness of its efforts to achieve those goals”*
**Financial Resources:** A significant challenge for any public institution like STCC is the heavy reliance on state support (appropriation); this challenge is exacerbated by years of enrollment declines that result in decreased tuition/fee revenue. While the portion of the STCC budget supported by state appropriation has been relatively stable over the past ten years (at approximately 50%), appropriation is the result of a legislative and political process, and economic challenges and uncertainty associated with COVID-19. In FY 2021, and as of Fall of 2020, a budget had not yet been approved by Massachusetts, and STCC was provided guidelines to use a figure that was 4% lower than the prior year, a cut of $1.13 million. In prior years, funding was appropriated for retroactive collective bargaining salary increases, but institutional resources are pressured because of the disproportionate facilities expenses and needs that remain outstanding. (The FY21 budget has been finalized...so this needs updating.)

Although STCC is financially stable, as reflected in the financial statements and relative to other Massachusetts community colleges, it enters unprecedented territory with the COVID-19 pandemic, and stability has required difficult decisions in terms of program and personnel support. As part of cost-cutting, and necessary budget savings during the early days of the pandemic, a number of measures were implemented including retrenchments of part-time employees, the implementation of a retirement incentive, a hiring freeze for most open positions, and postponement of deferred maintenance projects. In Summer 2020, administrators announced the discontinuation of seven smaller programs, representing 10 full-time faculty. The rationale for these choices, including the prediction of a larger-than-expected decline in Fall enrollment (the College had originally anticipated a 5% drop in Fall enrollment; the actual decline would be 16%) was presented to the BOT in July, with impact bargaining with the MCCC occurring over the summer. In terms of resources, it was clear that a $1 million relocation of the Cosmetology program out of Building 20 needed to be paused, and as part of program discontinuation, is currently being discussed with the BOT. Similar is the discontinuation of the Automotive program, which did not have a vehicle in its fleet newer than 2011 on which to teach students, and was located in Building 25, a structure with approximately $6 million in deferred maintenance needs. (Ongoing discussions are available in the Ways & Means and full Board of Trustees meetings throughout Fall semester 2020 and the attachments from those meetings to support these financial decisions are available in the workroom. They include FY18 and FY 19 Program Margins, as well as BOT, Ways and Means and Ad Hoc committee meeting presentations from the CFO, CAO, and President.)

The financial position of the college is highlighted through the ratios utilized to demonstrate financial solvency for community colleges; these ratios are reported both with and without the college’s proportionate share of the net pension liability and net other post-employment benefits (OPEB) liability, the numbers that follow are with those liabilities incorporated. The **Primary Reserve ratio**, which measures the financial strength of the institution by comparing expendable net assets to total expenses, is targeted for success at 25-40%. While STCC realized a decrease in this ratio in FY2019 from just over 20% (2018) to approximately 14%, this ranks in the top
three of the 15 Massachusetts community colleges. The Viability Ratio measures the availability of expendable net assets to cover debt should the institution need to settle its obligations. The target rate for Viability Ratio is greater than 1; STCC remains in a standing greater than 1 for FY2019 (FY2020 to be added with graphs).

STCC has realized a decrease in the final two ratios, Net Operating Revenue and Return on Net Assets both falling below the target rates. Ultimately, the Composite Financial Index, which incorporates all four of these ratios into a single score, shows that STCC is currently scoring lower in 2019 compared to 2018, when reporting with the liabilities, as well as without (do we have more recent data?).

**Information Technology and Physical Resources:** The College recently purchased an institutional license to the web-conferencing tool, Zoom, to provide faculty, staff, and students a virtual way to communicate asynchronously or synchronously for their courses, meetings, office hours, and events. This license will allow better communication to take place remotely. Faculty can record a synchronous session and provide links to students who could not attend live. They will also be able to store unlimited recordings of their classes and meetings so they can be available for review at a later time.

A new online support program is planned for launch in the spring 2021 semester. The IT department, with funding from the CARES Act, hired a team of 12 online student support representatives from the computer science program and tutoring center. The student workers will monitor Chat Now and provide real-time support for students with Blackboard and other online learning tools. In addition, more frequent training sessions, outreach programs, and reporting initiatives are planned to further identify and support online students.

STCC has sought to modernize its IT infrastructure, including the server environment. The Colleague servers have been moved to a new platform, and approximately 100 virtual servers have been migrated to the new environment. The move to virtual servers provides three main advantages for students and the campus: 1) it secures the environment, as the old equipment and operating system had reached end of support, 2) it allows faster response times and capacity for all systems, and 3) it provides better reliability and uptime for critical systems used to process registrations and financial aid. This also prepares the infrastructure to support future upgrades and new software, such as the planned implementation of the student planning and advising software and a new CRM enrollment management system.

In 2019-2020 the college upgraded the Firewall to a state-of-the-art Cisco Firepower technology. Along with the more secure features, the campus is now able to support double the internet bandwidth than in the past. Security Awareness is still an ongoing area for improvement as it relates to training for staff and faculty. The IT department continues to work with the Human Resource department to solidify this training. Professional Development Days in 2020 and 2019 included sessions on security awareness and materials are posted on campus and periodically sent to campus community members.

The College has invested in major infrastructure projects during the past three years including $408,000 for the new CORE switch, $410,000 VxRail servers, $200,000 for the Cisco switch refresh, and $218,000 toward the Firewall replacement. In addition, over $3.8M was allocated for new computers and laptops for faculty, staff, and computer labs through a lease program with Dell and Apple. Unfortunately, many of these were unplanned investments due to system failure.
and ongoing utilization of end-of-life equipment. This is primarily related to a lack of sustained funding for IT capital investments. The main wireless controller and most access points on campus, with the exception of building 19, have reached end of life. The Cisco VoIP system will require a major software upgrade next year, and approximately 30% or the switches on campus are end-of-life and are no longer updated. A 5-year IT capital plan is in development that will detail the unfunded budget needs ($8.2M) and provide a clear path to addressing both equipment maintenance and enhancement.

For redundancy and disaster recovery planning, IT is currently replacing the older SAN architecture with a fully redundant data protection system utilizing flash and cloud storage. The addition of virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) and increased internet bandwidth is planned for Spring 2021 to accommodate remote and online learning for students, faculty, and staff. (Need to address here the extent to which our disaster and business continuity plans are “regularly evaluated and updated,” new language in 7.25)

Infrastructure security is a key priority. While significant progress has been made, the network, servers, applications, and computers remain vulnerable to some risks associated with security and reliability. Over 100 computers still have Windows 7, which reached end-of-support in January 2020. IT is currently working on a replacement plan which has been accelerated by recent laptop purchases to accommodate remote work due to COVID. In the 2018 PCI Risk Assessment report, specific systems were designated as high risk due to outdated operating systems, software version, missing security patches, and bug fixes (do we have anything else to add from the 2018 PCI assessment?). IT is developing a risk management process with formal controls to monitor and improve the security posture. Information security awareness is an ongoing area for improvement as it relates to training for staff and faculty. A review of IT policies and procedures is necessary to address remote and online learning environments, along with a formal onboarding process in conjunction with Human Resources.

Dominating physical infrastructure concerns, and as highlighted in the Campus Master Plan noted in Standard 2, Building 20, which dates to 1941, is particularly problematic and represents over 20% of the campus’s total deferred maintenance needs. This building, at nearly 190,000 square feet, houses upwards of 15 allied health programs, including nursing as well as the SIMs Medical Center, a patient simulation hospital. Approximately 700 health students use the facility along with 100 faculty and staff. The building, however, is fraught with structural, mechanical, air-handling, water, and environmental challenges. In fiscal years 2017-2019, approximately $2.8 million in emergency repairs were needed, and multiple flooding events took place. The building carries a Facilities Condition Index of 1.0, which indicates the structure is not viable to rehabilitate or repair. The deferred maintenance (per a 2017 study) approaches $70 million, and the top two floors have been unusable since 2005 because of asbestos mitigation needs. Although the top three floors were added in the 1970s, the building is deemed historic by the Armory National Site, rendering demolition unlikely, even as vacating is clearly needed. A major capital proposal was submitted to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in late 2019 to vacate the structure and relocate the School of Health and Patient Simulation across the street to the STCC Assistance Corporation/“Tech Park,” at a cost likely to exceed $35 million. Funding remains uncertain: as of Fall 2020, there was legislation in the form of state House and Senate economic development bills that did include partial funding. As of this writing, the extent of funding that might be provided by the Commonwealth remains an open question, and there may be the need to see support from the BOT via use of reserves, as has been done previously, and
most recently in 2016 with $3 million to help finance the Building 19/Student Learning Commons major capital project. Additionally, the vacating of Building 20 does not preclude its need for maintenance estimated at nearly $70 million (as an asset of the Commonwealth, the building will still eventually require those needs be met).

**Projection**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Projection Detail</th>
<th>Est. Time of Completion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Actively align the IT budget with the replacement of critical systems and plans for new growth pursuant to the 5-year IT capital management plan</td>
<td>FY2022 and ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities</td>
<td>Work with DCAMM, the BOT and administration to strategically plan deferred maintenance capital spending</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities/Admin.</td>
<td>Continue to move efforts forward with DCAMM to planfully relocate operations out of Building 20</td>
<td>2021 and ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Secure &amp; strengthen the IT environment to ensure the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of information resources across the college; creation of disaster recovery and business continuity plan</td>
<td>2021 and ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resources</td>
<td>Improve the health and well-being of all employees at the College by providing networking, education, tools and other resources that cultivate and sustain a positive commitment to a culture of health and wellness.</td>
<td>2021 and ongoing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Standard Eight: Educational Effectiveness

Description

In accordance with its mission, STCC views the student as central to the plans and operations of the college and sees the quality of the educational experience and the achievement of educational goals as paramount. The College also recognizes that its students begin their educational pathways with different levels of preparation and life experience, and have a diversity of paths to reaching their educational goals.

The College community recognizes and embraces the diversity of its student population. The mission statement, “STCC Supports Students as They Transform Their Lives” was developed through the college’s most recent strategic planning process. It encompasses the diversity of our students in all of their characteristics, experiences, backgrounds, goals, and needs. As detailed in Standard 5, STCC serves students along many continuums and dimensions, with varied work experiences and family situations. These attributes intersect with student goals to determine students’ needs for various learning experiences, pedagogies, and modalities. Some students might need the option of evening classes, online learning, small class sizes, or a part-time course load. Work and family obligations may require the option of summer courses, winter sessions, and flex-terms. Students may need different financial aid packages, or they may require food or housing assistance, or childcare.

Students’ own goals for their education are also varied, whether they are looking to transfer to a four-year institution, find employment, apply to a competitive program within the College, or explore career opportunities and academic majors. The College mission is broad enough to encompass the varied backgrounds and goals of its students and is understood to include all students. While some students take exclusively distance courses or participate in online programs, many students will change course during their tenure at the college. While some begin their studies part-time, they may switch to a full-time course load, and while some may start in developmental coursework, many will progress to college-level coursework. They may also begin in a certificate program and continue to the related associate’s degree program, or vice versa. Recognizing this diversity, STCC supports students with the flexibility to move between modalities, allowing students the opportunities to meet their changing needs as they develop.

STCC has one campus. While some classes are taught at remote locations (such as a local prison, high school or childcare facility), these do not satisfy the NECHE criteria of an additional instructional location. Similarly, locations for clinical experiences and practicums do not qualify as separate instructional locations. Moreover, because the college is an open-access and open enrollment institution, the college does not target specific populations for recruitment efforts outside of its aim to serve the population of the greater Springfield area. Therefore, STCC views its student body as one, in all of its diversity.

Although the student body is singular, the college recognizes its varied makeup and therefore collects and analyzes data at multiple points in time and for different purposes. Upon entry into the college, demographics data and other student attributes are collected. These include age, gender, race and ethnicity, veteran status, city of residence, Pell eligibility, and first-generation status. A student’s course load characterizes their status as full-time or part-time, and students
are “flagged” with their status as a first-time first-year, transfer, readmitted, returning graduate, or continuing student.

As students progress through their first term and beyond, the Office of Institutional Research (OIR) compiles student success data in its Institutional Research Data Mart (IRDM), so that longitudinal analyses of retention rates, course completion rates, graduation rates, transfer rates, and employment outcomes can be tracked. Licensure pass rates are maintained by academic departments and Student Debt and the Student Loan Default Rate reports are kept by the Student Financial Services office. Quantitative information related to the student experience is also gathered at regular intervals through various instruments. These include the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) every three years, the annual Graduating Student Survey, and the annual Perkins Employment Survey. Wherever possible and appropriate, information is disaggregated by demographic characteristics, student load, or type of student (first time, transfer, readmitted, etc.). As a former Achieving the Dream College for over ten years, the institution is accustomed to disaggregating success metrics, most typically by race/ethnicity and gender, age, city, and Pell status, and where needed, by first-generation status.

STCC’s 2015-2020 Student Success Plan began with an analysis of success measures for the student body, and these were combined with other qualitative and quantitative data so the college could understand where students struggle to meet expectations, where barriers prevent them from progressing, and where opportunity or learning gaps exist between students with different racial/ethnic and gender identities. These analyses informed the goals of the plan, and continue to inform new initiatives. Recent examples include:

- The development of a First-Year Experience program, which includes orientation, a first-year experience course, professional academic advising during the first 30 credits, and implementation of an improved Early Warning System to improve retention in the first year and beyond. This system was revisited in 2019.
- The implementation of culturally-responsive professional development workshops, retreats, and discussion series to improve pedagogical approaches toward minoritized students.
- Student experience measures, particularly the graduation surveys and CCSSE, to provide data that the College can use to be more student-centric in its course offerings. Examples of changes that were driven, in part, by this feedback include:
  - An increase in online and hybrid offerings in response to demand indicated by filled sections.
  - The introduction of seven-week “Flex Terms” in response to students’ need for greater flexibility in course scheduling.
  - The expansion of Winter Intersession to accommodate non-matriculating students seeking additional general education courses.

While students come to STCC with various goals, the college holds expectations for what it believes all degree-seeking students should gain as a result of their education. These expectations are defined at the institution-level for associate’s degree students and at the program and course levels for all students.

**Institution Level goals:** Statements of “what students are expected to gain” are found in the 2015-2020 Student Success Plan, where the goals for student learning are explicitly stated as “strong core competency skills in five areas: written and oral communication; critical thinking;
quantitative reasoning; information literacy; and computer literacy regardless of the program from which they graduate.” There are success metrics associated with these goals: that by 2020 at least 75% of students will say that skills in these have improved “a lot or tremendously” on the CCSSE survey of 2020. The target goals are markedly above their 2014 baseline levels.

In addition, the following statement is found on the front page of the Assessment Office's STCCNet page:

**Core Competencies:** when students complete an associate-level degree program at STCC, in addition to having acquired and demonstrated program-related skills and competencies, students will also have the following general education skills and competencies:

- **Critical Thinking:** Students will be able to develop a disciplined, self-directed, systematic framework for thinking and problem solving appropriate to the situation.
- **Written and Oral Communication:** Students will be writers, readers, speakers, and listeners who use the English language effectively and appropriately.
- **Quantitative Reasoning:** Students will be able to develop a mathematical and logical mode of thinking.
- **Digital Literacy:** Students will develop familiarity with technology that will improve their creativity, productivity, and communication skills while also developing the skills necessary for research and information management.
- **Information Literacy:** Students will be able to recognize information needs and locate, analyze, evaluate and use information regardless of format.

**Program Level goals:** The college does not have overarching, general goals for its associate degree programs. Instead, each program has outlined its own student learning and educational goals on its webpage, found in the “Program Goals” section of the landing page. For example, see the Architecture and Building Technology Associate’s Degree Program page. There, interested students will find a list of the competencies they are expected to master by the time they graduate. Faculty members, with the assistance of the Assessment Office, developed most of these goals as part of the Student Outcomes Annual Reflection (SOAR) process. Using this process, faculty members reviewed and set program-specific learning goals for their students. While most of the goals developed were subject-specific, faculty also focused on aligning some of the learning goals with the five general institution-level core competencies discussed above.

The SOAR process was utilized from 2014 until 2017. Starting in 2018, the process was replaced with a five-year cycle Academic Program Review (APR) process to bring a more comprehensive review for academic programs. The development of program-level student learning goals are now part of the APR process. Another declaration of learning goals at the associate degree level is more implicit, but is reflected in the General Education requirements detailed in Standard 4. The common theme among all degree programs is a required but varying number of liberal arts education credits offered in each associate degree program (a minimum of 20 credits in general education, per Commission policy).

For certificate programs, the college does not have general goals. Instead, each program outlines its specific goals on its webpage. In contrast to the associate degree level, the common theme among certificate programs is the concentration on career/technical courses to emphasize career readiness.
For both associate and certificate programs, the program goals serve the larger academic community by preparing students for careers and further study based on alignment with labor market and transfer requirements. Indeed, prior to the development of new degree options, OIR completes a market analysis to determine the market demand for graduates of the program, along with the pay scale, and the average return on investment. This was done, for example, for proposed program options in Human Services/Social Work, Urban Studies, and Data Analysis, as well as proposed degrees in Health Science and Mortuary Science. Additional information about changes in the career field is gathered from program advisory boards (advisory board input helps to ensure program goals align with career trends), regional labor demands as articulated in the Pioneer Valley Labor Market Blueprint, and an understanding of general social needs, such as skilled health care workers who come from the community they serve.

For transfer programs, transfer partners sit on advisory boards for programs such as General Studies and Business Administration to ensure programs are aligned with common receiving institution practices and that students receive the most credit for work completed prior to transfer. For example, when the Business program recently realigned its curriculum and consolidated several programs, courses needed to be chosen to fill the spot of old electives, and input was provided by the advisory board, which included private college partners. Another example came with the creation of programs in Urban Studies (which incorporates a statewide MassTransfer transfer pathway in Sociology) and Applied Psychology (which incorporates a statewide MassTransfer transfer pathway in Psychology). Each of the curriculums was aligned to ensure that all students graduating from those program options would qualify for the MassTransfer agreements with public institutions, while also having transfer opportunities at private institutions. Alignments with four-year colleges are otherwise typically created when the college is approached by private institutions requesting transfer agreements. For example, the Human Services/Social Work program option was built to articulate with the Our Lady of the Elms BSW program that is offered (prior to the pandemic) on the STCC campus on Saturdays.

Course level: Statements about what students are expected to learn, know, and do by the end of the course are found in the “Learning Objectives” document, which is prominently displayed in the electronic course catalog and on the STCC website at the top of each course description page. The form lists each course objective along with its associated competencies (see, for example, Accounting 101). Faculty members include student learning outcomes on their course syllabi. A sampling of course syllabi, provided voluntarily by faculty members, can be found in the workroom and is illustrative of this practice.

Assessment of Student Learning: The Division of Academic Affairs supports the assessment of student learning at the college, program, and course level through its structure and allocation of resources. The Senior Director of Assessment oversees and supports the college’s Core Competency Assessment Team (CCAT), the APR system, and professional development opportunities meant to enhance the faculty’s capacity to conduct assessment for continuous improvement of student learning. To help further this end, a statement about the college’s Assessment of Student Learning system is included in the online catalog, alerting students to this system and the ways in which their coursework might be referenced or feedback might be called upon to support teaching and learning improvement efforts.

Each year since 2013, the CCAT team, a multi-disciplinary group of faculty, have gathered in the summer to review and assess anonymized student work to determine mastery of STCC’s core
The team focuses on one core competency per year, and student samples are collected from across the disciplines. Information on student demographics and cumulative credits are joined with student work, after which identifying information is redacted. Students are divided into two groups: those who have earned 45 credits or more, and those who have earned fewer than 45 credits. The team of faculty members develops and calibrate rubrics used to analyze and score student work. The CCAT team uses the Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) rubrics developed by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) to operationally define performance criteria. Since 2016, the results have been disaggregated by student subgroups and written into data reports that are shared on the college’s portal and over email. These reports are presented to faculty at early fall contractually-required Professional Days and are used to inform faculty of areas of strength and challenge. Thus far, as of summer 2020, the CCAT team has assessed Quantitative Reasoning, Information Literacy, Digital Literacy, and two iterations of both Written Communication and Critical Thinking. In response to CCAT findings in the area of Critical Thinking, the CCAT Team and the Assessment Office placed a special focus on the skill of “using evidence” by making it the basis for a Professional Day in August of 2015 and by holding a series of workshops throughout 2015 that focused examples and tasks around “using evidence.” CCAT results shown below show a marked improvement from 2014 to 2016 in this skill, along with related skills in “student’s position” and “explanation of issues.” As more faculty started to make the skill a demonstrable requirement of assignments, the percentage of assignments that were received the following year in which faculty had explicitly required demonstration of that skill increased dramatically. In 2014, only 59% of all assignments explicitly required demonstration of a critical thinking skill; in 2016, this percentage had increased to 83%. The expectation is that if faculty continued to ask students to explicitly demonstrate these skills that student performance in these skills would continue to rise.

CCAT results are also used to develop training, workshops, and other professional development opportunities to assist faculty. These workshops are offered on an ongoing and repeated schedule throughout the academic year, and at workshops on Professional Days. From 2015 through 2019, 387 unique faculty and staff members participated in hundreds of workshops and trainings, including 93 individuals in Assessment and 172 in Online Pedagogy. Some examples of workshop titles are as follows: Culturally Responsive Assessment; Rubric Development; Backward Design; Developing SLOs; and Incorporating Information Literacy. In turn, a number of faculty who have participated in these workshops have shared their own learning and best practices with colleagues at Professional Days.
Since the last comprehensive evaluation in 2011, STCC has continued to track and review student outcomes, with an emphasis on disaggregating student success metrics by race and ethnicity, gender, age, and Pell status. Student outcome information, including Federal Student Right-to-Know graduation and transfer rates, is published on the OIR website. This information includes IPEDS retention, graduation, and transfer rates, as well as institution-level employment statistics produced from the Perkins Employment Survey results. For programs that prepare students for licensure, licensure pass rates are published in the Outcomes section of the academic program page. See, for example, the Diagnostic Medical Sonography program page. The table in the Appendix shows an inventory of such licensure exams and the results found on the program webpage (paragraph about licensure rates to be inserted here).

In addition to the standard IPEDS success measures, the college also collects, produces, and reviews other measures of student progress and success. Understanding that many STCC students vary their course loads, stop-out and restart, or attend other colleges before enrolling at STCC, OIR has found the ATD metrics, introduced to the college in 2007, to be helpful in tracking students longitudinally. These metrics include part-time students as well as transfer students in their cohort definition and cover a greater percentage of the student body than the IPEDS measures. The ATD cohorts include all degree-seeking students new to STCC in a given fall term. From the point of entry, IR tracks their course pass rates, participation in distance learning, fall-to-spring and fall-to-fall retention rates at the college and within programs, graduation rates, transfer rates, and overall persistence rates. The college also tracks job placement rates at the college-level on an annual basis through the Perkins Graduate Survey.

The resulting success outcomes are published annually in the President’s Annual Report, which provides an overview of initiatives and progress at STCC during the year, and uses a considerable amount of assessment and success data to chart progress toward the goals laid out in the Student Success Plan. Findings include encouraging improvements in student success metrics for students of color, such as:

- an increase in graduation rates for students of color over the past five years (2013 to 2017 cohorts) from 13% to 17% for Black students and 11% to 15% for Hispanic students;
- an increase in the percentage of STEM grads who identify as students of color, from 20% to 25% between 2014 and 2018;
- an increase in graduation rates for students placing into developmental work, from 14.8% to 18.4% between 2014 and 2018;
- an increase in course pass rates for students of color between 2014 and 2017, from 70% to 77% of courses for Black students and 68% to 76% of courses for Hispanic students;
- an increase in participation in online learning between 2014 and 2018, from 16% to 25% for Black students and from 17 to 25% for Hispanic students.

Despite these improvements, gaps persist between students of color and students who identify as white in each of these metrics, and there have been little to no gains in fall-to-fall retention rates for students of color from 2014 to 2018. Thus, equity work related to student outcomes remains of paramount importance in the next strategic plan, and the priority of this work at the state level, announced in this past year, will lend support to such efforts.

The college also tracks more short- and intermediate-term student success measures, which are the building blocks of retention and graduation, as well as success after college. In an effort to understand and remedy the noted disparities in student outcomes (e.g. underrepresentation of
students of color in STEM and Health programs, and women in STEM), and to identify and remove barriers to entry and success, these metrics are also disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and gender. Some examples of these include reviews of applications by program; yield rates of applicants; FAFSA completion rates; placement into developmental coursework; and program enrollment and completion. At the course level, for faculty members attending the ESCALA workshops each summer (see Standard 6), student outcomes in their courses are disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, Pell status, and first-generation status, and faculty learn techniques and best practices to improve course outcomes for all students who have been underserved. While these studies and tracking measures are unpublished, they are used extensively, often created and delivered on an ad hoc or “just-in-time” basis.

Reviewing the participation and outcomes and noting disparities between groups has led the college to review inputs, such as the utilization of academic and student support services such as supplemental instruction (SI), TRIO, the Student Success Center, professional advising, and tutoring. Other examples of intermediate student success measures include participation rates in co-requisite support experiences, the First-Year Experience (FYE), and STEM Starter Academy, all disaggregated by subgroup.

The measures above reflect the college’s mission to “support students as they transform their lives.” As an HSI, we are committed to understanding the disparate impacts that our policies, practices, and the larger society may have on our students’ likelihood of success, and we continue our commitment to intervene on an ongoing basis to remedy those impacts and remove barriers to success, first by using data to inform ourselves. Because of this, we believe the college’s measures of student success are appropriate to its population. One area that is being analyzed currently, for example, is the use of Accuplacer to place students into developmental coursework. We know from the data that students of color are more likely to be placed at lower levels of placement using this method, increasing their time to college-level work and a degree. Using co-requisite models of skill instruction, or multiple placement measures (including high school GPA) instead has shown that a majority of those students who would have been placed in developmental coursework are able to start college level work, sometimes with support, much sooner than they would have otherwise.

To understand the extent to which students further their education after attending STCC, OIR tracks graduates through the National Student Clearinghouse (additional information on further education is gathered via the Perkins Employment Survey and aggregated at the institution level, and via alumni surveys administered to graduates of the School of Health and Patient Simulation programs). These data show that roughly 28% of STCC graduates transfer to 4-year institutions within the first year of graduating. The data are further analyzed by program of study, race/ethnicity, gender, and receiving institution. This information is reported to the Academic Advising and Transfer Center each November, and is included in APR data for transfer programs. The table below shows recent transfer trends by race and ethnicity.
While transfer surveys of receiving colleges are not undertaken, the college receives information via two reports: The University of Massachusetts at Amherst sends an annual report, “Selected Admissions, Enrollment and Retention Statistics Massachusetts Community College Transfer Students,” which provides aggregate information on the performance outcomes of former STCC students attending UMass Amherst. In addition, Achieving the Dream and the National Student Clearinghouse sends a report each year showing the persistence of students by cohort. From this report, we learn the percentage of students who leave STCC without graduating, but go on to other colleges and graduate. The Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE) also reports these measures using a similar methodology, based on data the college submits for each term. Both of these reports are useful as they are benchmarked against other community colleges.

Transfer data for specific populations is regularly provided to internal audiences. For example, transfer information on TRIO participants is reported to the Director of TRIO Student Support Services each November, and OIR also fulfills many additional ad hoc requests for “just in time” information on transfers to area public and private 4-year colleges or for particular programs. Examples of program-specific inquiries include a recent request from the Business Department to understand how many graduates transferred, where they were most often transferring to, and from which programs they graduated. This helped the department better understand outcomes for each of its programs, and was part of the data examined when considering the department’s programmatic changes detailed in Standard 4.

Data on employment after college is gathered via both direct and indirect sources. These include the Graduating Student Survey (see below); the Perkins Employment Survey; departmental alumni surveys (from the School of Health and Patient Simulation); purchased supplemental Alumni Outcomes© data from EMSI; and occasional reports from the DHE. Due to the data limitations of each of these sources, the OIR attempts to triangulate the information in order to paint a comprehensive picture of how our graduates fare after leaving STCC. The college is able to know, for example, that 87% of job-seeking respondents in the 2017 graduating class were employed at the time of the survey, and 75% were employed in a field related to their program of study. At the program level, department chairs track internships, clinical placements, and subsequent employment of students in their programs. However, due to both low response rates and a decentralized approach, this is an area of challenge for the college and will be addressed more fully in the appraisal section.
Each year in May, at cap and gown distribution, graduating students are invited to take the STCC Graduating Student Survey, which asks about the educational barriers and supports they have experienced along their path to graduation. There are also questions about plans for work, further education, military service, and preparation for continued education. Participation has been strong: Of the 553 students at cap & gown pick-up in 2019, 519 participated in this survey for a 94% response rate. This is out of 996 students receiving degrees or certificates that year. (Due to the COVID-19 crisis in the spring of 2020, the Graduating Student Survey was administered virtually in the summer of 2020, resulting in an uncharacteristically low response rate of 28%.)

In addition, the OIR administers the Perkins Employment Survey to each graduating class ten months after graduation. Since 2015, response rates on these surveys have remained steady at about 20%. In 2015, the office added an electronic survey option to the traditional mailing in an effort to improve this but saw no improvement in response rates as a result. Consequently, the overall response rate of the Perkins survey is too low to offer insightful feedback about job placement at the program level (and while salary information is included in the Perkins Employment data, it is not regularly considered at the program level due to low numbers for any particular program). However, some programs administer their own surveys. For example, the 12 accredited programs in the School of Health and Patient Simulation have sent a survey annually for the past five years. For programs in the Schools of Liberal and Professional Studies and STEM, which do not have outside accreditation, the gathering of employment outcomes is uneven across programs. When data is collected, it is not kept centrally at the college but is stored at the department level.

Surveys are also sent to employers annually to assess how STCC graduates perform once employed. This is done primarily in the School of Health and Patient Simulation departments as part of accreditation. (More detail is provided in the e1b forms, and sample surveys can be found in the workroom.)

Most of the aforementioned student outcomes reports and data are considered on an ongoing basis. Success data (graduation/transfer rates, student feedback) are used to focus resources on specific transfer pathways and articulation agreements. Effectiveness data (employer and student feedback) is used for the development of professional development activities. Employment statistics are reviewed to establish and strengthen community relations – to guide advisory board members and promote internship programs. Student experience feedback is used to adjust student support services, offerings, and processes. An annual review of the Graduating Student Survey is considered in order to tailor professional development activities to address areas students identify as barriers to completion.

While the college has recently begun to report courses with a civic learning component to the Commonwealth, information on civic participation beyond STCC has not been collected in a systematic or ongoing manner. However, inclusion of civic learning in the College’s general education program will be considered in the future, described in Standard 4.

STCC’s research and assessment activities are grounded in staff expertise, continuing education, and membership in professional organizations, as well as initiatives at the state and federal levels. The methodologies and definitions employed are consistent with NCES, the DHE, and professional organizations such as the American Association of Community Colleges, the Northeast Association for Institutional Research (NEAIR), and the National Association for
Institutional Research (AIR). These organizations are made up of practitioners and researchers in the area of community college evaluation and research.

As mentioned above, the college’s CCAT uses the VALUE rubrics created by the AAC&U to assess institution-level objectives and outcomes. As a national body, AAC&U rubrics are assumed valid because they incorporate a variety of perspectives and experiences in their creation. The STCC rubrics are normed for application at STCC to assess our students’ work and experiences more authentically. There is a possibility, however slight, that this may compromise the objective validity of the measures; however, the potential marginal loss of validity is outweighed by a significant improvement in the applicability and usefulness of the data for STCC’s particular purposes. The Senior Director of Assessment and a faculty representative participate regularly in statewide Advancing a Massachusetts Culture of Assessment (AMCOA) meetings, regional events, and conferences.

STCC was an active participant in the development of the DHE performance metrics, as the dean of Institutional Research sat on the steering committee as well as the Student Success Working Group. This effort was meant, in part, to inform the public and the legislature as well as our own BOT and campus about the success of students at our community colleges. It was also meant to be a mechanism to promote continuous improvement and close equity gaps.

Measures of success are benchmarked wherever possible. Comparison of STCC results and state/nation-wide outcomes occur with both IPEDS and ATD metrics, and the DHE’s Performance Metrics (CCSSE results are also benchmarked.) CCAT results are not yet benchmarked to other colleges, due to its developing nature. However, as it has progressed, a much larger sampling of student work has been assessed, making CCAT results more valid. A review has shown the generalized scores were aligned with the results of the Multi-State Collaborative. Now that the AAC&U has taken over this initiative as part of the VALUE Institute there are continual opportunities for STCC's involvement in benchmarking to national metrics (see projections).

STCC also understands the importance of its assessment information for the public’s need for information about the success of its enterprise and its students. Experience with US DOE Gainful Employment regulations has brought attention to the importance of our students being informed about their potential outcomes before committing time and resources, as well as lifetime-limited Pell grants, to an STCC education. The college is vigilant about making sure that public “Right-to-Know” data is published on the consumer information page in accordance with HEA requirements. This information is reviewed and updated annually each August (this page also contains links to student outcome data, job search information, and the net price calculator).

Job placement rates and licensure pass rates are included on most School of Health and Patient Simulation program webpages. The job placement rates come from surveys of graduates, and the licensure data are reported from the licensing boards. For both accredited and non-accredited programs, each program webpage contains a “Job and Salary” link, which takes prospective students to an EMSI Career Coach tool that provides information on career pathways in the subject, along with salary data and educational requirements for the field of study from O*NET OnLine®, a product of the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration (USDOL/ETA). This tool also includes links to institutions to which the student could transfer in the chosen field. (More discussion of this tool is found in Standard 9.)
CCSSE and graduation survey data, available on the OIR website, have been used to develop new programs, and informed the development of new student orientation. For example, information on children living in students’ homes was used to formulate a proposal for a new childcare initiative, and information about students’ employment demands was used to understand student needs during the development of the student retention plan.

Assessment findings are provided to department chairs during program review. They are also provided at departmental meetings. These findings have been used to make changes to program requirements. For example, after a review of CCSSE and Graduating Student Survey data on student engagement, a First Year Experience course was developed in order to promote student engagement, retention and success. Program-specific data is used by advisory boards in conjunction with their knowledge of current local and industrial trends to help the college make programmatic decisions to meet emerging needs. (CCAT results are used as a means of identifying areas for focus and development.) Another such change was the offering of professional development to incorporate more use of evidence and critical thinking in core courses.

Assessment findings are also used to make changes to developmental coursework. Over the past five years, co-requisite course offerings and new pathways were created and implemented in Math and English. In English, the corequisite “Open English” model was developed, whereby students who placed into developmental writing could take that course alongside the college-level English Composition course as a cohort, with the same instructor. The model has been honed over the year to meet the needs of students. The current model offers two different choices. The second of these allows some students to earn six college-level credits while fulfilling a humanities elective along with the English Composition requirement. In Math, the prerequisite for Statistics was changed from Algebra 2 to Algebra 1, allowing students to progress to college-level mathematics more quickly.

Appraisal

The Standard 8 committee reviewed statements about what students are expected to learn and know at the institution, program and course-level, identifying strengths and areas in need of improvement in both the articulation and communication of these statements. For institutional level SLOs, the committee noted these statements and expectations (specifically, about core competencies) are inward-facing to faculty and staff only, but not available to students. Indeed, a search of the website and student handbook revealed nothing readily available to students. The committee reviewed evidence, in the form of retention, graduation, and transfer rates, of student achievement at the college and found it to be at or above levels appropriate to comprehensive community colleges. However, it noted that gaps remain between students of different racial, ethnic, and gender identities, despite the improvement on key measures such as graduation rates, course completion rates, and participation in online coursework. Addressing these gaps requires continued work and attention, and remains a priority of the college through its equity and anti-racism initiatives. While assessment activities are taking place at all levels of the college, especially in the arena of program review, the college has work to do in creating a culture of assessment and supporting that culture with continuing professional development for faculty and staff. Documentation of results of assessment, to aid in the use of results to inform planning,
would benefit from a centralized approach, and the collection of job placement information for graduates needs improvement. Moreover, some of the structures in place to support assessment, such as the existence of standardized SLOs at the course level, remain a work in progress in the coming years.

For programs with outside accreditation reporting requirements, the college has a consistent record of reporting and disclosing licensure and pass rates to prospective students on its website. However, other programs do not have this type of information readily available to students. This is because the college relies on the Perkins Employment Survey, which has a low response rate (20%), and, as noted, when disaggregated at the program level, it provides little useful data for students or for departments to make decisions about programmatic changes. Department chairs may request information from OIR, but it is not proactively provided on a regular schedule.

Transfer information is readily available through the OIR page link to the [IPEDS Graduation & Transfer Rates page](#), and disaggregated data is provided to the Advising and Transfer Center and TRIO departments for review. It is also provided for program review. As the college focuses much of its messaging on being “technical,” employment information is of the utmost importance to career-focused students. In line with the mission of a comprehensive community college, transfer is a central need for students in the liberal arts and those in other programs who plan to pursue higher education at four-year institutions. While transfer data is available, it is not public-facing, nor is it program-specific or easily available to prospective students. Anecdotal evidence about employer satisfaction is provided by advisory boards, but this is neither systematic nor centralized in any way.

Overall, the college recognizes shortcomings in post-graduation employment data and the need for an increased focus on collecting post-graduation employment data, storing it in a centralized location, and proactively making the information available and accessible to all. Data should be disaggregated at the program level, when possible. When sample sizes are too small, it should be grouped into discipline-specific categories (e.g., manufacturing; landscape, architecture, and construction; early-childhood, elementary, and secondary education).

The health programs could serve as a model for the intentional sharing of student success data with the public; however, the former single-page information sheets were a much more user-friendly version of data distribution. Clear language to identify and direct prospective students to the information is necessary.

To address the area of emphasis regarding learning outcomes for students in online courses and programs, the standard committee was asked to appraise the following questions: *Do students in distance programs, or who attend exclusively distance courses, achieve success at the same level as students enrolled in on-campus programs? How do we know?* It was found that the college does not currently track students taking exclusively online courses, with the exception of those enrolled in the NECHE-approved fully online Business programs (Business Administration and Business Transfer). Longitudinal success data is not yet available because of the recent implementation of these two online programs; however, completion data has been examined, and longer-term graduation and retention trends will become available as the initial cohort (from Fall 2018) reaches graduation. Fully online offerings allow for greater flexibility in enrollment, and this benefit extends beyond the online-only students by offering scheduling alternatives for students enrolled in Business Administration and Business Transfer. Comparisons of course outcomes between in-person and online versions of the same course have been studied. **Insert**
**findings from these comparisons.** However, while the college does report the number of students taking *all* courses online, there has been no analysis of student outcomes to date.

Results of the Graduating Student Survey reveals that STCC students overwhelmingly felt prepared to continue their education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Felt prepared for continued education</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students reported their ability to think critically highest, and in comparison, they reported their ability to write clearly as lowest. Students also scored their ability to use math to address day-to-day issues relatively low.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome (Scores out of 5)</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thinking critically</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>3.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting along with many different kinds of people</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>3.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researching a problem and assessing information to address it</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>3.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persuade others of your point of view</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>3.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use math to address day-to-day issues or problems</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>3.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write clearly</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of Support (Scores out of 3)</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty or instructors during in-class time</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>2.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-class experience/activities</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>2.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family inspiration or encouragement</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>2.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic advisors</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>2.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internships, clinical placements, or other career/program experiences</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>1.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College staff (not faculty or advisors)</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>1.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The prerequisite changes (from Algebra 2 to Algebra 1) made to Statistics (MAT-115), the College’s highest-enrolled math course, have reduced barriers and increased the number of students completing their math requirement. As seen in the example below, student grade outcomes post-change are similar to pre-change outcomes, while access to the course was expanded.

### Impact of MAT-115 prerequisite change (Algebra 2 to Algebra 1) starting in 2015 fall

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>% &lt;C-</th>
<th>% C- or better</th>
<th>% W</th>
<th># students</th>
<th>% of all students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before Prerequisite Change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013SP</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>73.8%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013FA</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>75.1%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014SP</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
<td>70.2%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014FA</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
<td>66.4%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015SP</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
<td>61.3%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>442</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After Prerequisite Change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015FA</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
<td>70.6%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>473</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016SP</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>71.0%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016FA</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
<td>68.9%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017SP</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>67.7%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Beginning in fall 2019, the college waived developmental education entirely for incoming students with at least a 2.7 high school GPA, per the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education’s 2019 [Common Assessment Policy](#). The first set of outcomes for the 2019 Fall term was analyzed and showed that course outcomes were consistent between students exempted from developmental education based on their high school GPA and students placed into college-level work by Accuplacer. So far, it appears that this change has made the college-level courses more accessible to students and has not negatively affected student performance or success. The college will continue to track this information.

To determine English placement for students who have not met the 2.7 GPA waiver criteria, the College began using the WritePlacer exam in Fall 2019. Students were placed into one of the following levels based on their score.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WritePlacer Score</th>
<th>Course Placement</th>
<th>Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-2</td>
<td>Review for College Writing</td>
<td>Standalone Developmental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>English Comp 1/ Review for College Writing</td>
<td>Corequisite: 3 college credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>English Comp 1/Critical Thinking</td>
<td>Corequisite: 6 college credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>English Comp 1</td>
<td>Standalone College: 3 college credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-8</td>
<td>Honors English Comp 1</td>
<td>Standalone College/Honors: 3 college credits</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Review for College Writing, is the sole level of developmental writing. The course focuses on grammar, mechanics, and paragraph and essay development. Critical Thinking focuses on connecting evidence to assertions and defending arguments. Each of these is combined with English Comp 1 in the corequisite course pairings. While success rates are consistent across standalone English Comp 1 and the two corequisite options, achievement gaps exist between white students and their Hispanic and Black classmates. In English Comp 1, the total success rate (C- or better) since 2017 fall has been 72%, but White students perform markedly better (79%) than both Black (66%) and Hispanic (64%) students. In the English Comp 1/Review for College Writing co-requisite model, the total success rate of the credit-bearing English Comp 1 is slightly lower (69%), but the success rate for White students remains the same as the standalone version of the course (79%). While Black and Hispanic students perform equally well in the course (66% success rate), they underperform their White counterparts. This achievement gap is compounded further by the fact that a large percentage of students enrolled in this corequisite option are Hispanic (42%) and Black (19%). In the newly implemented English Comp 1/Critical Thinking corequisite model, the total success rate is slightly higher than standalone writing at (74%), and the success rate for White students is significantly better than other models (87%). Success rates for Black (63%) and Hispanic (65%) students remain on par with other models. This model targeted higher-placing developmental students, and the consistent success rates, along with the benefit of additional college-level credits, prompt further study to see whether this program could be expanded. The English department is considering expanding the range of eligible placements to include more students within the targeted population. This effort would offer students with placements traditionally in the English Comp 1/Review for College Writing range the opportunity to earn six college credits (including a general Humanities elective) while developing critical thinking skills readily applicable to other college-level coursework.

Developmental reading courses are also currently under review for future changes.

Overall, the changes to developmental pathways have resulted in a reduction in the percentage of credits spent in non-credit developmental coursework, most notably in developmental math.
Moreover, DHE data shows an ever-increasing percentage of first time, full-time degree-seeking STCC students who complete a college-level math and a college-level English course by the end of their first academic year. That percentage rose from 10% in 2010 (2009 cohort) to 27% in 2019 (2018 cohort).

Assessment: While there is information available on assessment on the Faculty Resources page through the STCCNet Portal, there is little application of the strategies or techniques outlined. The attempt to create a culture of assessment has waned in recent years. Classroom assessment techniques, including rubrics, are underutilized across the campus. Many faculty, particularly those in the humanities, rely on holistic grading techniques to gauge student performance in largely subjective terms. This lack of concrete, objective goals can make it difficult for students to succeed, and it creates inconsistency across sections of the same course. The variation that exists between assessments in multiple sections of the same course is such that assessing student success in a given course is difficult. Part of this is due to the STCC Professional Association’s reading of the contract’s language on student learning outcomes (DAY CBA, Appendix A), which has been interpreted to mean that individual faculty are solely responsible for creating and assessing outcomes.

Union leadership and administration have not yet found a way to negotiate a reasonable compromise between academic freedom and accountability to students. While other institutions, such as Cape Cod Community College and North Shore Community College, have posted agreed-upon SLOs for each course, many departments at STCC struggle to reach consensus on outcomes because of faculty insistence on total academic autonomy. Until consistent course-level outcomes and assessments are put in place, program-level assessments will suffer. While the college has instituted program review, APR focuses primarily on enrollment, curriculum, equity, and retention and graduation outcomes; thus, the collection and assessment of student...
artifacts have been weak. One proposed reason for this is the lack of administrative focus on the importance of assessment across the institution at all levels of student performance. While Professional Days often include workshops in assessment, there is little time focused on assessment itself, particularly outside of the limited scope of these annual events. However, there were workshops offered on the TILT model in spring 2019, which were slated to continue but interrupted in 2020 spring by COVID.

Despite the difficulties at the course level, the college has some systems in place to assess its core competencies on an institutional level. Each summer, CCAT focuses on one or two of the college’s core competencies and distributes the results to the campus via email. While this ensures immediate access to individuals, the results are not readily (or easily, as the writers were unable to find them) available in a static location. Results of CCAT work show that students are performing adequately and appropriately, given the nature of STCC’s two-year programs. While the AAC&U LEAP rubrics used by CCAT are intended to measure success over a four-year program, most of STCC’s core competencies are developed and reinforced during the first two years of a collegiate progression. When comparing results from previous years, we do see evidence of improvement over time. However, because the college assesses a different area each year, there are not enough data points to draw meaningful conclusions about sustained improvements at this time.

The most successful program-level assessment is driven by outside accrediting bodies, and this is evidenced by the development of shared assessments and rubrics in the allied health programs. The uniformity and collaboration in these programs should be a model for the rest of the campus as it begins to develop consistent SLOs and assessment practices. A strong administrative focus on the need to develop these attitudes and practices should include opportunities for faculty to work within and across departments to establish shared expectations and measures of success and mastery. The faculty may also benefit from a stronger administrative stance for the implementation of common SLOs, and promisingly, faculty and administration have recently begun to discuss implementation of common SLOs for gateway courses. Co-curricular assessment, while referenced in Projection, is not mentioned in appraisal.

### Projection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Projection Detail</th>
<th>Est. Time of Completion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Affairs (Academic Leadership Team)</td>
<td>Develop, schedule and implement a series of workshops and training sessions that will allow departments to develop common SLOs. Faculty will develop a process for assessing these common SLOs at the department level and will demonstrably use that assessment data to guide curricular changes. This process of common SLO adoption and assessment will apply to traditional face-to-face courses, hybrid courses, and fully online courses as STCC recognizes that it has one student body using the SOAR model.</td>
<td>Fall 2021 through Summer 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, Assessment Office</td>
<td>Each office that impacts a student's co-curricular learning will develop its own Student Learning Outcomes SLOs. Offices such as the Multicultural Affairs, Student Success Center, the Writing Center, and STEM Center will develop the SLOs and then determine a process to ensure that they are being met. With the guidance of the area Vice Presidents and the Senior</td>
<td>Fall 2021 through First round of Assessment begins Spring of 2022.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Director of Assessment, the first round of assessment will begin in the Spring of 2022.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Chairs</th>
<th>Departments will determine whether a capstone or internship should be added to their program as a means for students to integrate and demonstrate their learning, specifically as related to program learning outcomes. Specific SLOs and assessment plans would be prepared for these courses.</th>
<th>During each Academic Program Review, starting in Academic Year 2021/22</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OIR, Assessment</td>
<td>As we have identified Program Review as being a strength for the institution, our faculty and other stakeholders need data to guide their decisions. CCAT, CCSSE, the Graduation Survey, and Department Program Reviews will be available to all through the development of an interface that will allow access to this data. Information regarding enrollment, graduation completion, demographics, will be built into a Tableau report accessible to stakeholders. OIR will work with key stakeholders to develop reports for each area of the college.</td>
<td>Begin Spring 2021, complete by Fall 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean of LAPS/Dean of STEM</td>
<td>STCC will continue to investigate outside models and assess current internal models of developmental education that directly impact matters of equity and continue to offer co-requisite models of education in developmental coursework. Changes will be overseen by the respective Deans with the support of the Dean of Academic Initiatives. This process has already begun and will be ongoing.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Affairs, Program Chairs</td>
<td>Following Academic Program Review, Academic Programs will begin collecting artifact to be used for the assessment of program-level outcomes. This process will be conducted in year 2 and year 4 following the initial Academic Program Review.</td>
<td>Fall 2021</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Standard Nine: Integrity, Transparency and Public Disclosure

Description

**Integrity:** Operationally, evidence that STCC manages its academic, research, and service programs, administrative operations, responsibilities to students, and interactions with prospective students with honesty and integrity is demonstrated in various ways throughout the college. The College’s commitment to operating with integrity in all of its activities and relationships with its various constituents and stakeholders is reflected in the institution’s core values, set forth and prominently displayed on its web pages and in print materials.

**Core Values**

- **Dedication:** We believe that with pride and determination among our faculty, staff and students we can create a community of truly inspired individuals.
- **Integrity:** We are committed to fostering an environment that promotes truth and the development of individual character.
- **Respect:** We nurture mutual respect among faculty, staff, and students. With respect, we embrace differences to create an inclusive environment for all.
- **Community:** As a community within the community at large, we improve lives and strengthen the region through accessible and affordable higher education.
- **Student-Centered:** We encourage our students to be the best that they can be. We provide a diverse educational experience that promotes personal and professional growth.
- **Caring & Commitment:** As a community of dedicated faculty and staff who care about student success, we produce graduates who will contribute to the well-being of the region and the Commonwealth.

The statement on integrity in this list of core values underscores the expectations that board members, administration, faculty, staff, and students behave with integrity and truthfulness. Other statements of behavioral expectations can be found in the Student Code of Conduct, the MA Board of Higher Education (BHE) Non-unit Professionals Personnel Policies Handbook, and in the collective bargaining agreements for union staff and faculty. In addition, State and Federal laws, by which STCC is authorized to operate, stipulate ethical and behavioral rules and standards.

STCC derives its general degree-granting authority from the BHE. As an agency of the Commonwealth, the college must comply with Degree-Granting Regulations for the BHE outlined in Chapter 15A of Massachusetts General Laws Part I Title II. In addition to the general authority to grant degrees and accreditation of the Commission, 11 of the degree- and certificate-granting programs in the School of Health and Patient Simulation have specialized accreditation, as detailed on the college’s accreditation page (which easily found from a link on the “About STCC” section of the website). STCC communicates information about its accreditation status to the public via its website, and statements about accreditation are accurately and explicitly worded.
Other entities from which STCC derives authority to operate, grant degrees, accept students, and provide assistance are articulated on the college’s Accreditation page as follows: *The College is approved by the Board of Collegiate Authority, Massachusetts Department of Education; by the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission; by the United States Office of Education for listing in the Directory of Higher Education; for the National Defense Student Loan Program; for federal assistance from any unit of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare; by the United States Veterans Administration for the admission of veterans and war orphans; by the United States Department of Justice as a place of study for non-immigrant students; and by the United States Internal Revenue Service as a non-profit organization.*

All STCC Board of Trustee (BOT) members and employees must comply with the rules and regulations of the State Commission on Ethics. The BOT powers and duties are detailed in Section 22 of these laws. To promote adherence, the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE) provides resources, including conflict of interest and open meeting law training, to BOT members. Further training is taken up at the annual BOT retreats. See, for example, the September 27, 2019 BOT Meeting Minutes, describing a presentation on Open Meeting Law and other topics regarding duties of members of the BOT, given by Esq. Kenneth Tashjy, General Counsel of Massachusetts Community Colleges. The Clerk of the BOT is responsible for compliance with open meeting laws, including the posting of meeting announcements and all meeting minutes. These are easily found on the webpages for the BOT. The BOT conducts its business in open session and announces any executive sessions with the stated purpose and proper notice. (More detail on the BOT can be found in Standard 3.)

All administration, faculty, and staff members must abide by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts State Ethics Commission’s Conflict of Interest Laws. The Human Resources/EBOC department requires training of all staff and faculty during onboarding and periodically refreshes training on conflict of interest law, alcohol and drug-free workplace policies, and sexual harassment. In addition to state regulations, some employees must also adhere to the codes of ethics of their professional organizations, adding another layer of checks and balances. One example is the NASFAA Statement of Ethical Principles, the Code of Conduct for Financial Aid Professionals, which is found on the Office of Financial Services webpage. In another example, the Association for Institutional Research’s Statement of Ethical Principles is posted on the IR webpage, distributed to all new IR staff, and reviewed at least annually.

For students, the Student Code of Conduct can be found in the course catalog along with statements on Civility in the Classroom, Drug and Alcohol Policy, Hazing Law, and the Student Grievance Procedure. The Student Code of Conduct is discussed at length in the Student Handbook, which is found on the student resources page and distributed at New Student Orientation, where admissions personnel review the content with incoming students (the information is also shared in the New Student Orientation video). The Student Handbook is available on the STCC website and covers everything from academic policies to student grievance procedures.

The Student Consumer Information pages provide a standardized way for prospective and current students to gather information about the institution, student rights and responsibilities, student outcomes such as graduation and retention rates, and financial aid policies. In compliance with the Higher Education Act, the “About STCC” section of the college’s website contains a link to this page. It is also linked in the global footer found on all webpages.
Division of Student Affairs ensures that the links and information on these pages are reviewed and updated annually each August, and sends an email to students at the beginning of each term directing them to the consumer information page.

Information regarding the free pursuit and dissemination of knowledge is included in core documents and contracts. For students, it is located under rights and responsibilities in the student code of conduct of the 2020-2021 Student Handbook. For faculty, this commitment is covered under articles related to Academic Freedom and Academic Responsibility in Article VII of the MCCC Day contract, and Article VI of the DCE contract.

In a larger sense, STCC’s commitment to faculty and students’ freedom to teach and study is demonstrated by its adherence to the policies outlined in The Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Community Colleges' Policy on Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity & Diversity, which was approved for implementation by the Colleges and the Board of Higher Education, effective December 2015. STCC follows the applicable laws and guidelines related to Affirmative Action and Title IX, and these can be found on its website addressing Affirmative Action and Title IX as well as in the STCC 2018 Clery Annual Security Report, published in 2019 on the Campus Police webpage.

Additionally, statements regarding affirmative action, equal opportunity, and non-discrimination that are derived from the Massachusetts Community Colleges’ Policy on Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity & Diversity can be found in the Student Handbook under Section 4: Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, and Sexual Violence, which states: Claims of discrimination, sexual harassment and sexual violence, including Title IX offenses, such as rape, sexual assault, domestic and dating violence and stalking, shall be addressed under the College’s Policy on Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity and Diversity by the College’s Affirmative Action Official and/or Title IX Coordinator. For more information, please contact the College’s Affirmative Action Official and/or Title IX Coordinator.

On the Employment at STCC webpage, which is linked from the About STCC page, prospective employees will find information regarding STCC’s employment policies and procedures, including the following statement on Equal Opportunity:

STCC’s personnel and academic decisions, programs and policies are formulated and conducted in a manner which will ensure equal access for all people and prevent discrimination. As part of this effort, the College will ensure that employment and academic decisions, programs and policies will be based solely on the individual eligibility, merit, or fitness of applicants, employees, and students without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, age, disability, sex, marital status, military service, gender identity, genetic information, sexual orientation, or political or union affiliation. All inquiries concerning application of the above policies should be directed to Affirmative Action Officer and Title IX Officer, Kathryn Senie, Interim Assistant Vice President of Human Resources at kcsenie@stcc.edu.

MCCC Collective bargaining contracts define policies, practices, and grievance procedures for day and evening faculty. The Non-Unit Professional Handbook outlines guidelines for Non-Unit Staff and Administrators. Effective February 2020, STCC’s policies for employees have all been moved to the internally-facing STCCNet portal, where a comprehensive list of human resources, IT, state and federal, and academic policies can be found. Upon starting employment, all faculty
and staff are required to acknowledge, through digital signature, *(fact-check the digital signature reference)* that they have reviewed the policies. Employees are provided with materials and training to ensure they comply with the policies.

To ensure the integrity of its academic programs, each program holds annual advisory board meetings to ensure academic programs are aligned with current industry demands. The *curriculum committee* reviews all curriculum changes before they are applied to ensure they will benefit the program and updates the appropriate documents. To ensure communication, all of STCC’s degree and certificate program outcomes are posted on the *STCC website*. Course descriptions include links to prerequisites, and the “learning objectives” section details what is expected from student learning. Deans and Department Chairs ensure that all content related to their academic programs is technically accurate. Each academic program produces one-page flyers to inform prospective students of course content and available careers and transfer opportunities. The department head approves the flyers, and the formatting is standardized by the *Office of Communications and Marketing* which ensures that all materials distributed by STCC use professional language and consistent logos. *Student services* and *college costs* are also posted on the website.

While STCC is not a research institution, faculty-sponsored research is conducted on a limited basis. To ensure ethical treatment of research subjects, the college has an *Institutional Review Board* for any research that involves human subjects, with provisions for informed consent and assent for protected populations.

Annual Reports to the Commission contain information about plans for substantive changes, and any new programs for which 50% or more of credits can be earned online. They also contain the outcomes of any audits. Before submission, the report is circulated to the CFO, the CAO, the President, and any other administrative staff who are responsible for its content before submission to ensure accuracy and forthrightness. As demonstrated during the 2020 fiscal year, the college reached out to the Commission to describe its curtailment activities related to COVID-19 and informed the Commission of its intention to apply for general approval for the online delivery of programs. The college maintains a cooperative and productive relationship with NECHE staff and looks to them for guidance before making any changes that could be considered substantive. This guidance has included the reading of draft reports to ensure that the college understands its duties and the parameters for any such change.

**Transparency:** The STCC website is the main source of information for prospective and current students. Students considering attending STCC will find clear and prominent information about STCC’s *programs of study*, including degrees and certificates, as well as *course descriptions* and *schedules*. On the home page in the top navigation bar, prospective students will also find information about how to apply to the college, with step-by-step instructions under “Apply to STCC.” Visitors to this page can also follow the “Get Started” link, which provides pathways and resources for many different types of students, including recent high school graduates, senior citizens, DACA students, veterans, and transfer students. The “Apply to STCC” section also includes a link to the Admission Policies found in the college catalog and a description and FAQs about STCC’s open access policy. There is also important information about *placement assessments* for entering students, and prospective students can learn how to take a tour or find information sessions. Also prominently displayed on the top navigation bar, the “Pay for College” section contains information about how to pay for college, with links to Financial Aid and FAFSA information, along with student debt information. STCC also offers a multitude of
testimonials, information on programs, financing opportunities, and student resources so
prospective students can make informed decisions about their education.

There are easily found areas on the institution’s website listing information about the college’s
processes for grading, assessment, student discipline, and the consideration of complaints and
appeals. Information on grading and assessments is available in the Student Handbook, which is
also linked in the student resources section. Student discipline policies and procedures are
spelled out in the Student Handbook under the Student Code of Conduct section.

Also on the public-facing website, information for prospective employees can be found in the
“Employment at STCC” section of the About STCC page. This covers current job openings,
which are regularly updated, information on Affirmative Action and Title IX, employee benefits,
and the STCC Annual Clery Report.

STCC is responsive to reasonable requests for information about itself and informs the public
about how inquiries can be addressed. For Public Records request, the college complies with
Massachusetts Public Records Law (M.G.L. Chapter 66 & Chapter 4, Section 7(26)). Any
member of the public can access guidelines for making requests, and contact information for
Public Records officers. This information is found on the link to the public records page can be
accessed from the “About STCC” page and a search of “public records” in the search bar turns
up the page on the top of the list. Examples of public records requests in the past have included
directory information for all registered students, a listing of fiscal year grant awards, and annual
budgets and spending plans.

The college has a process for ensuring that academic and program information posted to the
college website is current and up to date. The information is reviewed and maintained by the
Dean of Academic Initiatives and the Webmaster, who ensure consistency with the academic
catalog. Individual program goals are listed on most program webpages. Accredited programs
publish outcomes such as job placement, completion, and exam pass rates on their program
webpages. Additionally, each program page on the STCC website includes a link to the US
Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics, where prospective students can find data and
information about careers and salary trends related to the program of study. STCC utilizes the
Acalog™ Academic Catalog Management System™ (ACMS™) to host current and archived
academic catalogs from 2013 to the present. Digital scanned versions of academic catalogs
going back to the college’s opening in 1967 are available on the STCC Library LibGuides
website. A set of the original course catalogs are held in the STCC Library Archives and are
available by appointment or during the Library's opening hours. The Office of Communications
and Marketing oversees all print publications and ensures accuracy and consistency.

Documentation regarding student success, learning outcomes, program excellence, and graduate
success can be readily found on the college’s website in the Student Outcomes section of the
Student Consumer Information webpage as well as the Institutional Research webpage. Relevant
documents include the Student Right to Know Graduation Rate and Graduate Placement in
Employment. The Student Success Plan is found under Marketing and Communications/
Publications on the About STCC page.

STCC utilizes the college website as its primary means of communication with the public. The
Webmaster, academic administrators, and content owners maintain the site and review content.
Content updates are communicated to the Webmaster by email and checked for accuracy and
logical order by the Webmaster. Content updates comply with W3C Web Accessibility Standards, and tools such as the WAVE Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool, PowerMapper Accessibility and Validator, and Adobe Acrobat Pro DC Accessibility Tools are used to ensure ADA compliance. A statement of web accessibility provides an avenue for users to report accessibility issues as well as request alternatives to web functions or information.

Two Town Hall meetings are held each semester and all staff and faculty are welcome. Questions are encouraged during the meeting and the minutes are sent out to the campus community within a week of the meeting in pursuit of transparency.

Public Disclosure: The STCC catalog describes STCC’s mission consistent with other communications and sources. The STCC catalog documents all institution and student policies including academic policies, non-academic policies, student codes of conduct, and statements and disclosures. STCC also dedicates a section of its public-facing website to its mission, vision, core values, and diverse population. In the “About STCC” section, STCC publishes a description of the size and characteristics of its student body, detailing the most recent fall enrollment by gender, race, and ethnicity, and average age. The page also includes a breakdown of credentials awarded by level and the number of alumni. The STCC home page is student-centered, in keeping with the college’s mission and core values.

Campus life information is featured in the top navigation bar of the home page. In that section, there are nine links encompassing details about the college’s diverse campus, such as arts and culture; the bookstore; campus police and emergency preparedness; athletics; food service, transportation, and parking; and multicultural services. The Student Consumer Page includes general institutional information that students need to know, such as facts about transfer credits, articulation agreements, academic programs, student fees, charges, refund policies, the student code of conduct, complaint process, and withdrawal information. Information about the process of applying to STCC is found in the top navigation bar of the home page, under “Apply to STCC.” In this section, prospective students will find the admission policy links directly to the course catalog, where the policy outlines requirements and procedures for admissions and forms of academic recognition.

Another prominent home page access point on the top navigation bar, “Explore Programs and Classes,” encourages students to explore a list of programs, courses offered, and other educational opportunities. This page is kept current, and any discontinued programs are removed from the website and print materials as soon as they stop accepting new students. A description for each course is listed in the course catalog and on the college website. Every spring semester, the Academic Deans review a report of all courses currently appearing in the catalog that have not been offered in the past two years. The Deans determine which courses are unlikely to be offered in the upcoming year, and those courses are removed from the catalog by the Academic Affairs office. (Inactivated courses are subsequently reinstated in the Catalog if the college offers the course again.)

Academic and support services are found under “Student Resources” on the top navigation bar of the home page. This includes information on academic advising, the registrar’s office, wellness center, and career services. Athletics, multicultural affairs, and student activities and clubs are found under Campus Life on the top navigation bar. Consistent with its mission, the wealth of support services on this page demonstrates STCC’s dedication to supporting students on their educational journey.
As discussed in Standard 8, goals for students’ education and the success of students in achieving those goals can be found on the website. The institution has a robust Student Success Plan that identifies a comprehensive plan for student success, including goals for academic success (e.g., retention and graduation rates). The objectives and deliverables are clear and there is a timeframe for when these goals should be accomplished. There are also responsible parties listed in the document to highlight shared responsibility and collaboration in fulfilling the overall mission of this plan. There is also an opportunity to learn about the information by utilizing the search engines to find information that is produced and published by the Office of Institutional Research.

In the Pay for College section of the website, under the Policies and Compliance section, students will find a link to the Net Price Calculator. The College Cost section includes information on tuition and fees and other expenses, and an affordability disclosure statement that provides the annual cost information for the "average" student as a way of showing the typical subsidy provided by state appropriations to subsidize the cost of attendance. They will also find information about available financial aid. Information regarding costs can also be found on the site by accessing Student Financial Aid Services.

All STCC BOT members are listed on the Board of Trustees page of the public site, in the “About STCC” section of the home page. Included are their positions on the board, principal affiliations, and corresponding positions held, and committee memberships. A list of all full-time faculty members, their departments, degrees held, granting institutions, office locations, office phone numbers, and STCC email addresses can be found on the Faculty Directory page of the public website. Administrative leaders are listed on the Office Directory page of the public site, which includes names, positions, office locations, office numbers, and STCC email addresses. There is also an office directory that lists key administrative officers; however there is not a systematic process for maintaining its currency. The STCC Foundation Board of Directors is listed on the Foundation Board of Directors page of the public site. Included are the positions of the board members, principal affiliations, positions at principal affiliations, and the membership of committees. A listing of the Foundation’s Corporators with their information is listed on the Foundation Corporators page of the public site.

For faculty and staff, the Human Resources page in the employee portal includes organizational charts listing Administrative Officers by title, but not by name. Other organizational charts for divisions of the college similarly list titles and reporting lines but do not include the names of the persons occupying the positions.

**Appraisal**

**Integrity:** STCC is a vibrant community college that invites and encourages all members of the community to learn and work in its facilities. It is expected that the faculty, staff, and administrators are to act with integrity, responsibility, and ethics, as outlined in the various documents on the college webpage. Indeed, when searching "ethical behavior" in the search box of the STCC website, the top links available on page one cover areas such as financial obligations, student behavior, sexual harassment, and domestic violence. The coverage over such a broad range of topics is evidence that ethical considerations are embedded in policies across the college.
The Standard 9 committee concluded that STCC's “pursuit of responsible and ethical behavior by members of its community” was present and accessible. However, the committee thought that this message should be underscored in the President’s Message given the Commission’s expectation that “[i]nstitutional leadership fosters an atmosphere where issues of integrity can be openly considered, and members of the institutional community understand and assume their responsibilities in the pursuit of integrity.” Additionally, the committee thought that statements about truthfulness, clarity, and fairness should be located throughout the website so that external constituents would be more likely to access them. Examples would include the Community Engagement page, President’s Message, the Trustee and Foundation pages, and Institutional Research.

**Transparency and Public Disclosure:** Information related to academic honesty and intellectual property rights was clear and understandable once located but would be easier to access if it was located in a more prominent space on the public website. Information for all members of the campus community regarding their freedom to education and study is found on the public site. However, the committee thought that the employment section might not be the first stop for people looking for such information. Information regarding non-discriminatory policies and practices in recruitment, admissions, employment, etc., is displayed on the public site and is easy to navigate. The information conveys a spirit of inclusiveness of people of diverse characteristics and backgrounds. The committee found that information regarding authority to operate was not easily accessible, other than in the student handbook, and that it might be helpful for information to be accessed via the main site or under the HR section of the website.

Some employment policies are accessible to the public through the STCC webpage. Internally, the STCCNet portal is well organized and includes every employment policy, but it is accessible only to College administration, faculty, and students, not the public. This is appropriate as some policies, such as the MCCC contract, apply only to current employees. On the other hand, committee members reported that it is frustrating to be a faculty member looking for a policy and not able to find it because some are stored on the main website while others are stored on STCCNet. It was suggested that it would make sense to move all policies that apply to the public to the main STCC website where it does not require a login to see them and add a link to "Additional Policies" that would take visitors to the policies page on the STCC website, prompting a login to STCCNet where the full complement of policies is stored. This page could have a message stating “these policies are available only with an STCC login.” STCCNet, in turn, would have links to policies that are available on the main website. This would ensure that no policies are posted in multiple locations, which creates problems for version control. Rather, every policy would be accessible from one spot, and only the people who need to see them could access them.

Despite the issue of navigating between the portal and the website, there is an indication of overall comfort with both amongst employees. On the Communications section of the Governance Survey discussed in Standard 3, most respondents (78%) said that they are comfortable using the portal, the college website, and e-mail as communication tools. On the other hand, on the accountability section of the same survey, respondents were evenly divided on whether the college consistently follows its own published policies and procedures, and only 30% of respondents felt that lines of accountability and responsibility are well understood, and even fewer (25%) believe these lines are documented. However, most respondents (67%) said
they know who to go to with concerns. These results suggest that a deeper understanding of this issue is warranted.

The Standard 9 committee utilized the data first forms in this section to test the availability, accessibility, and ease of discovery of information for students and prospective students to make informed decisions about attending STCC, financing their education, and availing themselves of the policies, procedures, and resources to succeed once they become students. As the main vehicle for the college to communicate with prospective students, the STCC website was examined, as were the pertinent documents contained therein. The committee found that STCC’s catalog is well organized and comprehensive, with easy access to archived catalogs as well as the current one. The committee found the following information easily on the website: the mission, expected educational outcomes; requirements and procedures and policies related to admissions and the transfer of credit; a list of institutions with which it has articulation agreements; student fees, charges, and refund policies; rules and regulations for student conduct; procedures for student appeals and complaints; other items related to attending or withdrawing from the institution; academic programs, courses currently offered, and other available educational opportunities; academic policies and procedures; and the requirements for degrees or other forms of academic recognition.

The Faculty Directory is found by following a link on the Contact Information/Directories page. Faculty names are displayed in a table sorted alphabetically by the last name. The Office Directory is set up in alpha order by department and displays all offices and the head of each office, allowing easy navigation. A search sorting feature could be added to make navigation of the table even easier. Documentation of faculty achievements is missing or hard to find on the public website, and it was recognized that a uniform method and criteria for including this would need to be developed if the college wanted to rectify this. All BOT members are clearly displayed with thumbnail photos of each member, and the STCC Foundation page lists corporators and all pertinent information.

The Student Success Plan was rather difficult to find on the STCC website. In addition, the committee questioned whether, in general, people at the college were familiar with the Student Success Plan, and thought it should be posted more widely.

Additional needed areas for website improvement were identified:

- While full of information, the “explore programs” page might be difficult to navigate for students, and through subsequent research, it was found that there has not been an assessment or focus group of students on this function of the website since one was done during the last website redesign in 2016.
- The amount of student debt upon graduation and loan payment rates were not found on the website.
- On the college Public Records page, there is some slightly outdated record information.
- The committee found that it is unclear how the college ensures that print materials are consistent with the online catalog and thought that a process should be created to ensure that printed copies of the academic catalog are available for distribution to the public upon request.
- The current process for reviewing non-academic web content is on an as-needed basis. A more systematic process is being developed, where content owners would receive regular email reminders to review and update content.
STCC is diligent about keeping the website information current and accurate. A member of IT, the webmaster and the office of communications and marketing have a standing weekly meeting to discuss issues related to the website. To ensure the accuracy of information presented on the website, Deans and Department Chairs have a process to ensure that all content related to their academic programs is technically accurate. *(what is this process, and is it effective and used across all departments?)* Periodically, IT sends a notice for each employee to review their directory information and provide updated information. The information on the Student Resources was thorough and complete, but the committee thought it would benefit from additional information and links for the Wellness Center and Mental Health Counseling sections. These were added as a result of the committee review.

One strength in the area of transparency was that the Office of Communication and Marketing reaches out to prospective students through social media by posting updates of campus news, recruiting events, and other information on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

At present, there is no description of how the college handles matters related to standard 9.24 which states that “the institution ensures that when students, prospective students, or members of the public are interacting with an individual acting on behalf of the institution through a contractual or other written agreement, the relationship of that individual to the institution is clear.” It was expected that this information would be readily accessible and located within the Student Affairs section of the website, however, it appeared that there is likely no policy or procedure, but rather a practice that has yet to be codified and documented.

**Projection**

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<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Projection Detail</th>
<th>Est. Time of Completion</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>IT</strong></td>
<td>Conduct an assessment on external website use vs. internal portal use for information—and develop a policy and strategy for education/training on how to use and find information in each space.</td>
<td>Implemented by Spring, 2022</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Marketing, Academic Affairs</strong></td>
<td>Conduct a focus group to consider the effectiveness of the program information on the website for prospective and new students—including a diverse/equitable lens.</td>
<td>Implement resulting changes by Spring, 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Webmaster, Page authors</strong></td>
<td>Post statements of ethical behavior, truthfulness, and clarity prominently on stcc.edu pages of high traffic and leadership (the Community Engagement page, President’s Message, the Trustee and Foundation pages, and Institutional Research); Make academic honesty policy more prominent</td>
<td>Summer 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marketing, IT</strong></td>
<td>Create guidelines for website content authors for consistency of messaging, language, accessibility of language for first-gen/ELL students.</td>
<td>Spring-Fall, 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STCC</strong></td>
<td>With current Student Success Plan and the next strategic plan: Commit to posting links to the document and all updates and refreshes in several places throughout the website and portal where students, faculty, staff, and administration frequently navigate.</td>
<td>Fall, 2022 and Ongoing</td>
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To ensure adherence to non-discriminatory policies, STCC will use the results of the Equity Audit and the Governance Survey to align practices in recruitment, admissions, employment, evaluation, disciplinary action, and advancement. The results of the Equity Audit will also be utilized by the College to examine hiring practices, activities, and teaching and learning opportunities to ensure that the campus culture is welcoming to students, faculty, and staff of color.

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<th>STCC, HR</th>
<th>Fall, 2022 and ongoing</th>
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<td>STCC, HR</td>
<td>Develop and post policy about clear representation of STCC employees when interacting with the public pursuant to standard 9.24.</td>
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Area of Emphasis: Request for General Approval for Distance Education

In response to the Commission’s invitation to use this comprehensive evaluation as an opportunity to request general approval for distance education, the College offers the following evidence of its readiness.