

**Keene State College**  
**Summary List of Strengths, Concerns, and Considerations**

Below the visiting team has provided a list for strengths, concerns and considerations for each of the standards. The strengths for each standard are many, and evident. Within a few of the standards we identify areas of concern as well as those we labeled as concerns/considerations that KSC will need to address. We have also taken the liberty of noting areas that we believe warranted further consideration. In many cases, those areas that raised concerns or suggested additional work, have also been noted by KSC in the self-study and were discussed openly during the campus visit.

**Standard One: Mission and Purpose**

***Strengths***

- The mission is clear and distinctive and is indeed implemented in a manner that complies with the standards of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education.
- KSC's is a member of COPLAC and its role as the public liberal arts college for New Hampshire is enthusiastically supported and promoted by the Board of Trustees.
- The mission is reviewed regularly and the mission statement was most recently updated in 2008

**Standard Two: Planning and Evaluation**

***Strengths***

- The planning process is appropriate for the campus. There are clear institutional goals founded on an accepted set of values and five main priorities. The use of strategic initiatives and transparent processes has served the college well.
- Learning outcomes assessment is moving forward, some areas are further ahead than others. The practice of assessment is widely accepted and understood.
- Shared governance is a clear strength. They work very hard at it, and at this point everyone is enthusiastic, it has been a key to the institution's success in planning and evaluation.
- Decision-making is appropriate. It is understood and accepted that planning leads to detailed recommendations but the administrators decide.

- Increasing use of data and information are strengths, they are used transparently and widely to inform planning, assessment, and institutional change. While progress is needed this is a substantial achievement in the institutional culture.

### ***Concerns***

- A comprehensive Enrollment management strategy is in preliminary stages and needs to continue to develop. There is a budget-driven process to arrive at basic numbers with projections and consideration of retention rates, more can be done to direct decisions to numbers or goals or targets for specific programs/schools
- The Strategic Initiatives process within Planning should and will be examined with care - the administration has suspended this process temporarily to evaluate it; this review can help ensure that the process continues to unleash creative and strategic ideas that are sustainable within budget and human resources; supporting a more transparent process that links planning priorities to operating budgets.

### ***Considerations***

- Learning outcomes progress needs to be accelerated in some areas – continue to find ways to identify student success.
- While data use is a strength there is more work to do to link data – the integration of data systems is desirable and could be an added resources to improve efficiencies and transparency.

## **Standard Three: Organization and Governance**

### ***Strengths***

- KSC has enjoyed strong and stable leadership over the past five years. The President's Cabinet models teamwork and facilitates shared governance that is reflective of the values of the institution.
- There is also great stability and strength within the faculty and staff – a caring culture
- KSC promotes and enjoys broad participation from all constituents within the shared governance system. This model of shared governance is in keeping with the mission and the values of the institution.
- Consistent collaboration and communication between governance groups (the two staff councils with faculty unions) has promoted more equitable treatment of all employees.

- KSC has earned the respect of the USNH Board of Trustees because of use of mission as rationale for initiatives, understanding and support of the community in which the College is located, and effective management of resources.

### ***Concerns/ Consideration***

- A complex and multi-layer governance system which demands a high level of participation has evolved at KSC – there are times when such a system can impede communication – multiple bodies addressing the same issue, delay response time. Participation in this system allows great, campus wide involvement – but does have an impact on workload for faculty and staff alike.
- As the institution continues to evolve – building an infrastructure to support the dynamic change is important - creating and updating position descriptions that more clearly identify current or emerging roles and responsibilities would be of help.

## **Standard Four: The Academic Program**

### ***Strengths***

- KSC has accomplished major curricular reform in the past several years; we cite especially the implementation of ISP, the move to 4-hour courses, and the establishment of an Honors Program.
- Assessment activities are well under way, and are broadly supported among the faculty. Good discussions are happening - The administration is supportive, and provides funding for faculty development activities in this arena.
- The program review process is well-established, with an action plan at the end of the process.
- The new science building is up and running,
- Within ISP, the required foundation courses in writing and mathematics have consistent requirements across sections and the required upper-level interdisciplinary courses show curricular boldness
- While there are governance issues to be addressed and resolved - the planning, for both academics and resources, necessary for the incipient nursing program seems very strong, and is getting good help from the system office.

- KSC's role as the public liberal arts college in the university system is well-understood, both on campus and in the system office, and there appears to be widespread campus enthusiasm for it.
- The campus culture allows difficult and lengthy discussions to take place in a civil atmosphere.

### ***Concerns***

- There is a very heavy reliance on adjunct and other part-time instructors, even in the ISP signature program.
- There is variability among the experience and credentialing of adjuncts.
- Overall supply and demand imbalance for courses, especially ISP courses, leads to scheduling difficulties for students.

## **Standard Five: Faculty**

### ***Strengths***

- There is a committed faculty capable of working together with the administration to accomplish significant curricular revision; shared governance is clearly evident. Administration and faculty share a commitment to mutual gains
- Faculty view relationships with students as the highest priority and are deeply committed to helping students to be successful in their academic journey.
- There is a high level of collegiality amongst the faculty who clearly enjoy working with each other.
- There are several avenues available for faculty, including adjuncts, who seek support for scholarship; faculty demonstrate appropriate levels of training, scholarship, and professional activity.
- Assessment work has been prioritized and supported by faculty development workshops.
- Salaries for tenure-track professors seem to compare favorably to comparator schools.

### ***Concerns***

- Use of multiple independent databases and a lack of consistent definitions of faculty categories unnecessarily complicates efforts to summarize faculty data.

- There is a heavy reliance on adjunct faculty. A corollary of this is the demand for service on tenured and tenure-track faculty. Workload demands from advising and service make scholarship difficult and could have a negative impact on quality of teaching.
- Although adjuncts teach over 50% of the total credits hours, the evaluation process is far less stringent and in some cases non-existent since the evaluation process as currently designed places more service demands on already over-burdened department chairs.

### *Considerations*

- There is a tremendous amount of worry about the cuts in adjuncts that will accompany increases in tenure-track lines. Including concern of tenure-track faculty regarding the loss of adjunct colleagues whose contribution they value.

## **Standard Six: Students**

### *Strengths*

- Student support services at KSC are based on an understanding of student development theory and the expectation that student learning outcomes provide a foundation for their work which includes a strong teaching component.
- Student's value the liberal arts mission of the college – and expressed a true appreciation of the importance of broad preparation, critical and creative thinking as a foundation for success in their chose professions or in graduate
- The ability of members in the various offices providing student services Admissions, Student Affairs, and the Academic Advising and Career Services to collaborate within the department and across departments to consolidate efforts and solve problems and the valuable role they have played in supporting the transition to ISP is commendable.
- Collaborations across divisions such as the recent addition of the learning communities is a strength and supports the potential for stronger assessment of intellectual skills, civic engagement and integrating modes of inquiry through extra and co-curricular activities.
- The College is at the early stages of shifting attention on enrollment away from an admission driven strategy to a focus on retention and graduation.

### ***Concerns***

- Staffing and space are emerging as significant challenges in areas with a great deal of student contact; in particular, Campus Safety and the Counseling Center both face increased demand as the student body continues to grow. Recreational Sports Programs are also feeling stretched.

### ***Considerations***

- Although efforts are apparent to improve the use of technology to address growth needs, some areas (such as Residential Life) are still lagging.

## **Standard Seven: Library and Other Information Resources**

### ***Strengths***

- There is strong institutional commitment to information literacy and instructional technologies and Solid financial and personnel support for the library and the Center for Engagement, Learning, and Teaching;
- There are model relations between the library and local cultural and community organizations.

### ***Considerations***

- The success with information literacy and learning technologies may require additional staff and expanded facilities;
- A simplified authentication to proprietary digital resources might improve access and patron satisfaction.

## **Standard Eight: Physical and Technological Resources**

### ***Strengths***

- KSC has experienced a significant amount of growth in both enrollment and physical plant. The growth has been accomplished while maintaining the character of the campus and enhancing the presence of the college on Main Street, the primary approach to the center of the city of Keene. In addition the college continues to make investments in the physical plant.

- The College features new and high quality dining facilities, residence halls and student recreation and activity space. In the most recent year, the College invested \$4.2 million for improvements to Educational and General Space and \$1.2 million for residential hall improvements.
- The campus is maintained in a good condition; the quality of the maintenance is a credit to College staff and their custodial and service partners.
- The campus community feels engaged in the planning process for information technology with participation occurring on the College Information Technology Committee (CITC), the Academic Technology Steering Committee (ATSC) and the Enterprise Information Systems Steering Committee (EISSC). The CITC provides overall oversight and guidance while the other committees work on more targeted areas.
- KSC replaces its computers and other hardware on a four year replacement cycle and disposes of the equipment in a manner which protects student data. KSC is also working very hard to imbed sustainability initiatives throughout the campus

### ***Concerns***

- The use of multiple systems at KSC leads to challenges when attempting to access clear and concise data. KSC is the only UNHS School which uses Datatel and as a result does not benefit from some potential System sharing of programs.

### ***Considerations***

- Wireless availability is limited in academic and student spaces - planning is underway to address this issue.

## **Standard Nine: Financial Resources**

### ***Strengths***

- The University of New Hampshire Board of Trustees and System Office are very supportive of KSC. The System Office provides a critical resource to the College offering creative responses to capital projects, debt/project financing and investment of resources.
- KSC has managed its finances in a prudent manner. Strong reserve levels, case balances, and debt coverage are indications of the financial strength of the institution.

- KSC focuses operating expenses on instruction (57% of operating expenditures in 2008) and academic support (10% of 2008 expenditures). These figures are much larger than most of the COPLAC peer institutions focusing a higher percentage of resources on its academic mission.
- The College's budget process plays a key role in ensuring the financial stability of the institution. Rigor in preparation and expenditure monitoring leads to predictable operating results

### ***Concerns***

- The College is constrained from expansion of residential space on campus due to system-wide debt limits. This will challenge the college if it seeks to replace current beds or expand the on campus residential capacity.

### ***Considerations***

- The College may want to consider developing an intellectual property ownership policy that could support generation of future revenue.

## **Standard Ten: Public Disclosure**

### ***Strengths***

- There is an institutional commitment to transparency and continuous improvement.
- There is a true understanding of the utility of the web as vehicle for the dissemination of information.

### ***Considerations***

Ensuring the currency and accuracy of web content is crucial. There may not be a single solution, and multiple approaches may be necessary to ensure currency.



## **Standard Eleven: Integrity**

### ***Strengths***

- The College's mission and values, policies, procedures, and practices set forth expectations of integrity, transparency, and responsibility. These standards apply to internal, as well as external constituencies, and guide the College's activities, services, publications, curricula, day-to-day functions, and long-range vision.
- The College's current policies ensure that its principles are upheld and a level of transparency maintained by outlining specific guidelines for behavior and specific penalties for noncompliance. Policies are located and outlined in a variety of locations such as the Faculty Handbook, Human Resource handbooks, the Student Handbook, all of which are available online as well as and a new online Policies and Procedures webpage.
- In order to increase efforts to diversify the campus, the College hired a cabinet-level chief officer for Diversity and Multiculturalism. The College has an active Campus Commission for Diversity and Multiculturalism and Campus Commission on the Status of Women.
- The Office of Disability Services is committed to ongoing and expanding support for accessibility for students, staff, and faculty.
- College policy also states that it does not discriminate on the basis of —gender, race, color, religion, age, national origin, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, or veteran's status in any of its programs or activities.

### ***Considerations***

- A common concern and challenge across higher education and here at Keene is to continue to focus attention to ensure that materials on line – for example, college catalogs - are easy to navigate and provide clear and understandable connections to college policies.