

Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students

of

COLBY COLLEGE

Waterville, Maine

By

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

Prepared after study of the institution's
self-evaluation report and a site visit
September 24-27, 2017

The members of the team:

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

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

Please complete **during the team visit** and include with the report prepared by the visiting team

Date form completed: 9/24/2017

Name of Institution: Colby College

1. History: Year chartered or authorized 1813 Year first degrees awarded 1822

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

3. Degree level:

Associate Baccalaureate Masters Professional Doctorate

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

	Full-time	Part-time	FTE	Retention ^a	Graduation ^b	# Degrees ^c
Associate						
Baccalaureate	1920	0	1920	94%	91%	479
Graduate						

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

5. Student debt:

	Most Recent Year	One Year Prior	Two Years Prior
Three-year Cohort Default Rate	2.0	2.6	0
Three-year Loan Repayment Rate	98	97.4	100

	Associate	Baccalaureate	Graduate
Average % of graduates leaving with debt		29%	
Average amount of debt for graduates		27,953	

6. Number of current faculty: Full-time 185 Part-time 23 FTE 208 (Fall 2016)

7. Current fund data for most recently completed fiscal year: (Specify year: 2017)
 (Double click in any cell to enter spreadsheet. Enter dollars in millions, e.g., \$1,456,200 = \$1.456)

Tuition	86,552	Instruction	49,861
Govt Appropriations		Research	
Gifts/Grants/Endowment	42,125	General	27,840
Auxiliary Enterprises		Auxiliary Enterprises	21,302
Other	17,812	Other	45,735
Total	146,489	Total	144,738

8. Number of off-campus locations:

In-state 1 Other U.S. 0 International 0 Total 1

9. Number of degrees and certificates offered electronically:

Programs offered entirely on-line 0 Programs offered 50-99% on-line 0

10. Is instruction offered through a contractual relationship?

No Yes Specify program(s): _____

Introduction

The Colby College community welcomed the Evaluation Team to campus on September 24, 2017 for the start of its four-day comprehensive evaluation site visit. Prior to and during the visit, the team reviewed the self-study report, a collection of supporting documents, Colby's website, and the strategic planning document, *Eminent Colby*. While on campus, the team held numerous meetings with administrators, faculty, staff, students, trustees, and alumni who shared their perspectives of the institution.

All members of the Colby community with whom the Evaluation Team met were forthcoming in their conversations with the team and aware of the purpose of the visit. Members of the team conducted one-on-one and small group interviews of dozens of leaders and representatives of the various constituencies and facets of the college, including the college's senior leadership team, faculty committees, task forces, student government association and other student leaders, and administrative professionals. The team held a meeting with trustees only; among the seven trustees present or joining telephonically were the Chair and Vice Chairs of the Board, and chairs/vice chairs of four board committees. During three separate open meetings, team members also met with faculty members, administrative staff, and students.

The self-study report, the Data First Forms, and supplementary materials provided a comprehensive depiction of the college that was validated by the on-site visit. Colby staff were responsive to the team's requests for additional documentation. The team's review of the self-study report and other documents, the campus visit, and the chair's telephonic meetings with the Colby leadership team prior to the visit collectively have provided the basis for the information and evaluative judgements contained in this report. The nine chapters address the team's findings in relation to the corresponding *Standards for Accreditation* of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

1. *Mission and Purposes*

Founded in 1813, Colby College is today on an ambitious journey to bring its mission to life in new and vibrant ways. There is a noted spirit of innovation, energy, and connection to the community that is brought by David Greene, who is starting his fourth year as president of this august institution.

The current mission statement for the college was adopted in 1987. The mission is two paragraphs long—in other words, longer than most—and refers to Colby's place as a liberal arts college committed to preparing students for life, enabling each student to fulfill her or his unique potential, and creating an environment in which teaching, learning, and research flourish. Colby stands for diversity and respect.

In addition to the mission statement, members of the Colby community often refer to the Colby Plan, adopted in 1989 and commonly referred to as the precepts. The precepts specify 10 values that the college believes are at the heart of a liberal arts education and

which guide students as they design their Colby education. These values include developing particular skills, such as critical thinking and acquaintance with other cultures, as well as knowledge in a broad array of disciplines. The precepts also refer to reflecting on one's own values and exploring one's responsibility to contribute to the world. Currently, these precepts are being reconsidered by a task force whose members also will review the college distribution requirements.

Since 2013, matriculating students signal their willingness to join the Colby College community and uphold the values of integrity, accountability, and respect by signing the Colby Affirmation. This integrity contract, developed as the result of a multi-constituency task force appointed by the Board of Trustees, covers the students' academic and social lives.

In spring 2016, the Committee on Mission and Priorities, established by President Greene, brought a discussion of the college's mission to an all-faculty retreat. At the retreat, there was consensus among the faculty that the college's mission continues to be appropriate for Colby. Indeed, throughout the constituencies on campus and among the trustees, there is a strong sense that there is value in the liberal arts education that Colby provides. At the same time, the mission statement, the Colby Plan, and the Colby Affirmation are relatively long statements. Therefore, it is hard to know whether different members of the community would describe the mission and purpose of Colby College similarly or whether they identify with different aspects of the mission. It is also difficult to determine what the different constituencies think is distinctive about a Colby education. The Evaluation Team believes the college would benefit by developing short statements that will allow the distinct mission and purpose of Colby College to be clear, and will allow that clear mission to penetrate through multiple layers of the organization.

2. Planning and Evaluation

Planning: Colby College demonstrates a tradition of utilizing working groups and task forces to plan and evaluate its activities. Prior to President David Greene's arrival, the most significant of these planning efforts included creation of The Strategic Plan for Colby in 2002. This strategic plan sought to diversify and strengthen the student body, expand the faculty and broaden the curriculum, initiate new building construction and renovation, and bolster fundraising. More recently, a Task Force on Student Accountability (2012-13) explored the academic and social climate on campus, leading to a statement of values, the Colby Affirmation, which each entering student signs. The Evaluation Team reviewed evidence of these and other important initiatives since 2000 (e.g., a Task Force on Statements of Values in 2003; a Campus Culture Working Group in 2009, focusing on student alcohol use; and a Curricular Planning Working Group in 2009, which led to Colby's Writing Program and a Center for Teaching and Learning) that show the college's willingness to think critically about its work and imaginatively about the future.

With the appointment of President Greene in 2014, Colby embarked on several new, intensive planning initiatives intended to build on its considerable strengths and to reflect

changing priorities. The Evaluation Team's review of the reports prepared by the groups assigned this work reveals task forces that represent a range of community members, including students when appropriate; clear charges; the gathering and consideration of community input; thorough research and analysis; and specific suggestions and recommendations. Together, these more recent planning initiatives form the framework for Eminent Colby, a strategic planning document prepared in the summer of 2016, that establishes the college's priorities and its path to becoming a preeminent liberal arts institution. The Evaluation Team observed that these initiatives have had an impact on all areas of the college. A few examples follow.

- A 2014 Board of Trustees retreat focused on Colby's place among similar colleges and identified ways to strengthen the college. An infusion of resources to financial aid has allowed the college to begin attracting entering classes that better reflect the diversity and academic preparation it seeks in its student body.
- A faculty-led Task Force on Shared Governance was established (2015) resulting in structural changes in governance, including the establishment of a Faculty Steering Committee that strengthened the faculty's voice in college decision-making.
- The Global Task Force in 2015 comprised 17 faculty members, students, and administrators and led to more than a dozen recommendations (and several imaginative "radical recommendations"). One example of an outcome is DavisConnects, a program of connections and resources that supports international experiences, research practice, and internships for all students.
- A faculty-led task force on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion included 16 members from across the campus that resulted in dozens of short- and long-term recommendations touching every facet of college life. One recommendation was a climate survey, undertaken in 2017, that will provide a baseline against which to measure future initiatives supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion. The Evaluation Team's discussion with a member of the original task force and with staff from the Pugh Center (which focuses on student diversity, equity, and inclusion) confirmed that the task force's recommendations were heard and, if continued, will lead to change.
- Currently, a faculty-led Distribution Requirements Task Force is studying whether the structure of the curriculum is the best approach to supporting the college's academic goals. Colby's mission and precepts are eloquent statements of the college's aspirations for student learning. These statements are the foundation of institution-, program-, and course-level goals, and they guided the development of distribution requirements in 1991. The task force's review of the current academic requirements seeks to determine whether they remain the best approach to achieving the goals captured by the precepts, reflect current best practices and the future of the liberal arts, and undergird Colby's aspiration to become a "preeminent liberal arts institution." The task force's work included a faculty retreat in 2017 to discuss a proposed model, and work is ongoing. This effort reflects the careful and inclusive nature of the college's planning.

It is clear to the Evaluation Team that targeted financial donations are a strong influence on the prioritization and sequencing of planning initiatives. Generous gifts for athletics and

the art museum, for example, have raised the focus on these areas. Colby already has made significant progress in the “quiet phase” of a planned comprehensive campaign and will launch the public phase earlier than expected. Colby’s senior leadership team conveyed to the Evaluation Team the flexibility inherent in the Eminent Colby framework. The team urges the senior administration to assure attention is paid to key planning initiatives that may not be as attractive to donors but nevertheless support the core mission of the college, either directly through the academic program or indirectly, for example, through infrastructure and human resources

Routine planning takes place through periodic Board of Trustees retreats. Financial planning is managed by the college’s excellent and experienced financial team, whom the Evaluation Team found to have strong, collegial relationships with key stakeholders such as the president, the board, the Investment Office, and the Advancement Office.

Evaluation: Colby has benefited from a growing Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (IR Office), which has supported its evaluation efforts. The Evaluation Team reviewed a range of materials reflecting the college’s use of several widely used evaluation tools, including the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), the Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium (HEDS), the Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct, and the annual HEDS Senior Surveys. Results of the senior survey were shared with staff in the Office of the Dean of the College in a highly detailed summary designed to stimulate discussion about Dean’s Office staff support, an example of Colby’s use of systematic feedback from students.

An analysis of student outcomes based on data from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) provides quantitative and direct evidence of the strong preparation Colby students receive for graduate education. Data across a range of graduating classes reflected the graduate institution attended and the type of degree earned, and the data were presented at the level of the students’ Colby majors.

The IR Office also used NSC data to explore the destinations and outcomes of students who had transferred out of the college, an area of concern at Colby. The IR director is working with the provost and dean of faculty, the dean of the college, and the vice president and dean of admissions and financial aid to more fully explore the reasons students transfer and possible ways to address this issue.

Colby utilizes evaluation in other meaningful ways. An example is its unique Overseer Program that has been in existence since 1980. Appropriately qualified alumni, parents, and educational leaders are elected to join with peer reviewers in providing external evaluation for academic programs, which are generally reviewed on an eight-year cycle, as well as administrative departments.

Materials provided for the August 2016 Board of Trustees retreat focusing on Colby’s planning framework, Eminent Colby, reflected in-depth institutional and peer data. Presentations of financial, academic, enrollment, and other data were thorough and effective. The Evaluation Team was impressed with the scope and amount of information

provided. This information offers a solid foundation as the college enters the public phase of its comprehensive fundraising campaign in the fall of 2017.

The Evaluation Team notes Colby's focus on planning and evaluation during this current period of expansion. There is a strong sense of community among faculty and staff, a commitment to the college, and a strong work ethic. Members of the Colby community are generally aware of the initiatives articulated by President Greene and are excited by the changes and high expectations for their contributions. The college will need to remain vigilant to the potential for fatigue and burnout that can accompany rapid change. It is also important that initiatives and priorities, and the overarching goals that they support, are clearly communicated by senior staff throughout all areas and levels of faculty and staff, for example, by sharing and discussing the Eminent Colby document more broadly. In order to most effectively execute the college's plans, Colby's dedicated faculty and staff need the opportunity to understand the context of their work and have the time to reflect on and process the changes expected of them.

While staff in the Institutional Research Office are well qualified for their roles, the capacity to conduct research in that office and to undertake reporting and analysis across the college is severely compromised by an antiquated technology infrastructure. Data are kept in multiple unlinked, often outdated, systems, with structures and tools that are inadequate both for operations and for data extraction or reporting. Staff time in several offices is spent on tasks that many peer institutions have automated. In addition to the cost in labor and morale, the college may expose itself to serious risks, including errors associated with the use of highly manual processes, and poor decision-making because of inadequate data. The Evaluation Team was encouraged to learn that the college has been evaluating its technology infrastructure and the changes needed to upgrade and better integrate systems and tools across the college. A solid technology infrastructure and carefully developed data governance are essential for the strong research and analytic capacity that will support Colby's ambitions.

3. Organization and Governance

Colby's long tradition of shared governance has been renewed in recent years by reforms in the organization of the Board of Trustees and in college and faculty governance. As the self-study acknowledges, these changes are too recent for their effectiveness to be fully tested and known. But there is broad agreement that they are vital to the college's success at this point in its history. As Colby embarks on a boldly expansive strategy, closely identified with the president and a relatively new leadership team, these governance structures will play an essential role in ensuring that the transformations under way fully take root within the Colby community.

The responsibilities and governance relationships among the governing board, the administration, and the faculty are delineated in Colby's updated bylaws. The college has a set of handbooks for faculty, staff, and students. The most comprehensive is the Faculty

Handbook, which recently has been revised. The handbooks for staff and students contain much valuable information, but might usefully be enhanced with details about the inclusion of staff and students in governance committees.

Governing Board: The Board of Trustees consists of the president and 35 additional trustees. The board is clearly identified as the primary governing authority of the college. Its focus is directed to the long-term strategic interest of Colby. The board explicitly acknowledges that it is not responsible for the day-to-day running of the college, but its members maintain a notably close collaboration with those who are charged with management; for example, on a weekly basis the president and the general counsel hold check-in calls with the chair and co-vice chairs of the board. Each trustee is expected to serve on two to three committees of the board each year and to make Colby a top philanthropic priority. The bylaws contain detailed conflict of interest provisions, and trustees complete an annual Certificate of Compliance.

Major changes in the board's operation occurred in 2016. In the old structure, board committees were largely aligned with functional divisions of the administration (Educational Policy, Budget and Finance, Development, Student Affairs, Admission and Financial Aid). The new structure creates committees that are by design cross cutting (e.g., People and Programs, Financial Strategy and Business Affairs) and are focused on strategic direction. The new structure is highly disciplined: there is an annual theme for all board meetings, and the Board Affairs Committee reviews the strategic questions and proposed outcomes of each meeting. The self-study noted some challenges presented by this transition, as trustees accustom themselves to a less tactical role. But board members with whom the Evaluation Team met expressed satisfaction with the new committee structure and the stronger strategic focus. The team notes the consultative process that the board used to develop this new structure. It was designed by a working group composed of trustees, senior administrators, and representatives from the faculty, student body, and staff.

The Evaluation Team commends the efforts of the board to ensure that its composition reflects the diversity and inclusiveness of the campus community.

The board has a trustee orientation and mentoring program. Its Board Affairs Committee is charged with periodic review of the bylaws and with enhancing the board's effectiveness.

The bylaws stipulate that the president is appointed by the board and serves at the board's pleasure. Documents provided to the team ("New Board Structure") note that a subset of the Board Affairs Committee "will be appointed by the chair to advise the board on all matters related to presidential succession when necessary." The Board Affairs Committee conducts an annual evaluation of the president's performance, which involves review of a self-assessment prepared by the president and a written evaluation delivered to the president at the time of each Commencement.

Internal Governance: Since the appointment of President Greene, there has been an almost total transformation in the senior leadership group. The enlarged leadership team

is united behind an ambitious aspiration to raise Colby's stature. The team includes two members who formally served as trustees of the college and is significantly more diverse than previous iterations of the group. In such a large senior team weighted toward operational rather than academic expertise, the chief academic officer has a special responsibility to ensure that academic concerns remain central to the college's decision-making. In recent years, the chief academic officer has been re-titled as provost and dean of the faculty to indicate the position as the second officer of the college. The current provost, who took office in July 2017, is directly responsible to the president and was appointed on the recommendation of the faculty members serving on the Faculty Steering Committee. The new provost comes from within the Colby faculty, and faculty members with whom Evaluation Team members spoke expressed uniform optimism about the new leadership in the Provost's Office.

The faculty's role in governance has been significantly revised under the new administration. In 2014-15, a faculty Task Force on Shared Governance was created to address what was perceived as the faculty's diminished voice in agenda-setting and decision-making at the college. This task force made extensive recommendations designed to ensure the faculty's appropriate leadership role in curricular, academic, and educational domains. The task force's key recommendation was to create a Faculty Steering Committee charged with working with the president to manage agendas of faculty meetings and advise the president and provost on policy matters such as the allocation of faculty staffing. The Faculty Steering Committee has added new opportunities for faculty members to advise the president, although again, it is too soon to say whether the committee will realize the aspirations that task force members had for it.

The Task Force on Shared Governance's 2015 report is informed by a clear understanding of the lines of authority within the institution. There was impressive coordination between the faculty's and the board's governance reviews (the task force met with the same consultant working with the board), and the task force report expresses a high level of trust in shared governance. The Evaluation Team notes that the task force declined to recommend the inclusion of an elected faculty member in the senior staff on the grounds that "the president has a right to consult with whomever he chooses as his closest advisers."

The self-study report acknowledges that the new model may be too ambitious in attempting to synchronize monthly meetings at the divisional and college levels. This points to the relative complexity of Colby's faculty governance structure. For a small institution, there is a rather well-developed divisional structure, with four academic divisions that play an important role in faculty affairs. The Evaluation Team commends the college for recognizing the increasing importance of interdisciplinarity by creating a fourth division. As the trend toward interdisciplinarity continues and as the faculty take these commendable steps to streamline their agenda-setting and clarify expectations for participation in governance, they might consider revisiting the role of the college's divisional organization.

The team noted the frequent use that Colby has made, and continues to make, of task forces. In addition to the Task Force on Shared Governance, team members also spoke with faculty and administrators who have served on task forces dealing with Free Expression; Global Colby; Diversity, Inclusion and Equity; and Distribution Requirements. While not all task forces have yielded results (for example, there have been a number of attempts over the past decade to rethink distribution requirements), the model has enabled the institution to tackle pressing issues, involving multiple constituencies, in an expedited and efficient manner.

Another notable aspect of Colby's governance is the prominent role of overseers—alumni, parents, and others who are elected by the board to serve multi-year terms as an advisory council to the president. One of the primary functions of overseers is to participate in visiting committees to academic departments and programs (a practice initiated in 1980). This gives board-appointed designees a direct evaluative role in the academic program. The team learned that overseer reviews have led to important policy and resource decisions within the college. While the pairing of board appointees and subject experts represents a non-traditional approach to the review and evaluation of academic programs, the evidence that the team reviewed (self-studies, program reviews, department responses) suggests that the current system is leading to wide-ranging and actionable evaluation, and has the welcome side effect of generating well-connected advocates for departments. The Evaluation Team did not hear any concern that this system impedes faculty in fulfilling their primary responsibility for the content, quality, and effectiveness of the curriculum.

The Colby Museum of Art is carefully and closely integrated into the College's governance structure. The inclusion of the museum's director in the senior staff is a strong statement of the museum's centrality to the institution's mission. The museum has a powerful and supportive Board of Governors (23 in number, 3 of whom are also trustees of the College). The Board of Governors advocates for the museum's programs and priorities both within the college community and nationally. The chair of the Art Department and the faculty member who chairs the Center for Arts and Humanities are ex officio governors. Like other key groups in the institution, the Board of Governors has engaged in substantial and ongoing review of its governance structures.

To an extent that is highly appropriate for a tight-knit college community, members of the college staff are included in governance processes to a considerable degree. For example, a staff representative sits on the Committee on Mission and Priorities, a cross-constituency committee chaired by the president and charged with advising on emerging plans and priorities. The college also has created two advisory groups: The President's Staff Advisory Council and the Administrative Leadership Group. Staff members appreciate these opportunities to be informed about, and advise about, college priorities. If anything, they would welcome more opportunity to participate, for example by the addition of a second staff representative to the Committee on Mission and Priorities.

Similarly, Colby students have the opportunity to participate in governance roles at many levels—on the Board of Trustees, on the Committee on Mission and Priorities, and on

numerous other committees. From all evidence available to the Evaluation Team, Colby does a conscientious job of considering student views in matters in which students have a direct and reasonable interest.

4. The Academic Program

Introduction: Colby offers a liberal arts academic program leading to the bachelor of arts degree in 58 possible major areas of concentration with 33 optional minors. The college awards approximately 500 degrees per year. The degree requires 128 credits composed of a major, participation in three January programs, and completion of a 10-area distribution requirement. The most popular majors are government, economics, global studies, psychology, and environmental studies. The departments with the highest enrollments are economics, mathematics, English, government, biology, and psychology. Approximately two-thirds of students study off campus during a January program, for a semester, or for a full year. General education is organized around the precepts, a set of ten principles identifying Colby's vision for the core components of a liberal education.

Assuring Academic Quality: The academic program is overseen by the faculty through several modes of governance. The entire faculty votes on proposals for new departments, programs, majors, minors, general education, distribution requirements, and the precepts. The Academic Affairs Committee brings motions for such proposals to the faculty after its own review and vote. At the departmental and program level, the quality of individual courses and overall success of the major(s) and minor(s) are reviewed by the department on an ad hoc basis. Every academic department and program undergoes a regular external review by an Overseer Visiting Committee described earlier. These reviews engender a thorough evaluation of the academic quality of the program by the faculty and the academic leadership.

The Academic Affairs Committee includes four faculty members—one from each division of study—elected by faculty vote, and one provost-appointed faculty member from any division. Five administrators serve ex officio (four with voting privileges, one without), and two administrators regularly attend as invited guests. Two students serve as appointed representatives of the Student Government Association (SGA). The provost is the official chair of the committee but delegates this role to an associate provost. In a meeting with members of this committee, the Evaluation Team learned that the members have worked to improve the committee's practices over the past few years. The committee now conducts—and asks the proposing department to conduct—a wide review of the potential side effects of curricular proposals, consulting across campus with faculty and officers whose areas might be affected, in order to improve the workability of a plan. This is why members of the Academic Affairs Committee consider it helpful to have so many administrators participate in committee deliberations. Members noted that, in the past, the committee's proposals were regularly voted down at faculty meetings, but since adopting this approach their proposals now pass routinely.

Program Reviews

The college follows a policy of conducting external reviews of every academic department and program every eight years. As described earlier, the reviews are referred to as the Overseers Program. Each review is conducted on site by two people from the Colby community—alumni, parents, and emeriti board members—called overseers (several faculty noted that they would prefer a more collegial term), alongside two faculty from peer institutions. Reviews are based on a department’s self-study, on-site meetings, and a review of the report from the previous visit, focusing on whether its recommendations were or were not implemented. The Overseers Visiting Committee submits a report and the department/program submits a response. Faculty referred to this review process frequently during the visit, projecting to the team a sense that each review constituted a rigorous milestone for the department/program, functioning as an agent of change. This review process is the college’s most engrained way of pursuing continuous academic improvement.

Undergraduate Degree Programs: With 58 majors and 13 stand-alone minors hosted by 23 departments and 8 programs with joint or stand-alone faculty appointments, staffed by 185 full-time faculty, Colby aspires to offer a curriculum broader in scope than might seem feasible for a college of 2,000 students. Its slate of majors features the core liberal arts disciplines as well as several specialized (e.g., financial markets) and interdisciplinary (e.g., global studies) majors. Colby offers all students the opportunity and funding to complete an internship, study internationally, and participate in civic engagement experiences. The majority of students complete a capstone project in some form as part of the major, developing core skills in research, creativity, writing, and presentation under faculty supervision. A majority of students present their capstone projects to the college in the annual Liberal Arts Symposium, a day when all classes are cancelled and the entire campus focuses on student presentations of their work.

The wide scope of majors and minors is supported in several ways: some majors are interdisciplinary, with requirements met by courses across several departments; many faculty have interdisciplinary expertise such that one course can serve several majors; some majors are sub-specialties within the department (e.g., in addition to the economics major, the department hosts majors in financial markets and economics-mathematics; and environmental studies students major in environmental policy or science); and some majors have several courses with large enrollments, such as economics and government. Colby sees this broad scope of curricular options as one of the distinguishing features of the college.

Recent faculty hiring extends this model of achieving curricular breadth through interdisciplinary capacity: three faculty searches in computational biology were conducted last year, with sole (not joint) appointments in biology, computer science, and statistics. Each search’s advertisement noted that it was part of this multidisciplinary cluster of searches in this field and further emphasized that Colby expects these faculty to participate in its unique partnerships with Maine’s Jackson Laboratory and the Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences, thus even further extending the scope of the appointments to connect with environmental sciences. Similar search strategies have been used to hire faculty in various

fields that contribute to environmental studies. This approach seems like a promising way to attract talented scholars who want to work with talented colleagues. However, a possibly problematical aspect of this approach arose during our discussions on campus, with faculty from other areas; some of them expressed the view that the cluster of appointments in computational biology came as a surprise and at the expense of investments in other areas also needing faculty strength. Thoughtful communication from senior leadership about such choices could help address concerns over future allocations of faculty lines.

The college sees itself as strong because it offers a rich curricular scope that makes maximal use of faculty expertise. That strength entails risk; faculty reported to the Evaluation Team their concern over the precariousness of having many programs that rely on only a few individuals. Particular concern was raised about the viability of small interdisciplinary programs whose contributing faculty had retired and were not replaced in the same field, with no communication from leadership about whether future searches would be mounted to support the small program. Faculty and the academic leadership commented to the team on the challenge of sun setting programs, noting past examples where one program ended by community agreement while another was retained by faculty vote despite an administrative proposal to eliminate it. The Academic Affairs Committee discussed the issue with the team but did not point to a strategic approach. As the college pursues new initiatives for curricular growth, without adding new lines, it may want to pursue a strategic planning approach to determine program viability.

General Education: The current general education program emerged from the precepts of a liberal education, as noted elsewhere in this report. Currently, there are 10 required areas of study: one first-year writing course, three semesters of foreign language study, and courses designated as arts, historical studies, literature, quantitative reasoning, social sciences, natural sciences, diversity, and wellness. This is a traditional model emphasizing exposure to the four divisions of study and has served to embody Colby's vision for a well-educated person.

As discussed in the section on assessment, the faculty has established a task force on the distribution requirements to reconsider the current model. In the team's meeting with members of this task force, the faculty noted that Colby lacks a first-year seminar program, but they considered the required first-year writing-intensive course to be particularly effective and important. They described it as the foundation on which students build their capacity to do advanced work, and discussed the question of whether to try to connect it in some way with a course that is research intensive.

Advising

Faculty embrace their role as advisers, and all faculty advise first-year students. The team heard of robust engagement in advising; each new student is assigned a faculty adviser almost immediately upon accepting Colby's offer of admission, and that adviser emails the student in late June or early July to begin the relationship and offer to speak by phone. Students (albeit a small sample) expressed deep satisfaction with faculty advising. Faculty noted the challenge of engaging students in discussion of the distribution requirements in

more intellectual terms than just the shorthand of checking off boxes. The task force on the distribution requirements might benefit from addressing the intellectual and instructional role of advising as part of its recommendations.

The Major

All students must complete a major in order to graduate. Students must declare a major prior to pre-registering for courses for the junior year. They may declare a major as early as the period during spring semester of the first year when sophomore course selection occurs, but those who take this option are encouraged to re-examine their decision during the sophomore year. Students are not allowed to elect more than three declarations; they may complete two majors and one minor, one major and two minors, or may triple-major. Requirements for Colby's majors are clearly articulated in the Colby College Catalogue, with all majors requiring at least 10 courses or the equivalent, including a balanced ratio of intermediate and upper-level courses through which students have the opportunity to gain in-depth knowledge of the field. Most departmental majors, and virtually all interdisciplinary majors, require some form of a culminating experience to allow students to synthesize the scope of their studies. A Student may propose an independent major to the Independent Study Committee; the committee must approve a detailed written proposal from the student and approve any significant deviations from it. In addition, one or two faculty advisers must commit to oversee the program through to completion.

Several departments and programs offer the traditional major plus one or more options of "concentrations" within the field of study so that students may focus their study in a particular area within the field. Examples include neuroscience, astrophysics, statistics, creative writing, and environmental science, which are offered as concentration options by larger departments. Departments emphasize the importance of faculty advising for student majors to gain a comprehensive perspective on the discipline and the post-graduate options that it may lead to. Several departmental listings in the catalogue note that students considering graduate study in the discipline should complete a specific range of courses beyond the minimum required for the major.

Professional certification can be pursued only through one program at Colby: educational studies. Students can pursue this via two options: completing the program's minor in professional certification or through a double major in education studies and a department or program that corresponds to a field in which Colby offers certification. As the catalog notes, students who complete Colby's professional certification program are eligible to apply for teacher licensure in Maine in fields including English, social studies, life science, physical science, mathematics, French, German, and Spanish. The professional certification program provides students with practice-based experience by requiring them to teach full time (8 a.m.–2 p.m., Monday–Friday) during the spring semester of the senior year, and offering the opportunity to apply for admission to a post-graduation "ninth semester" program of working full-time in a local school under the guidance of a faculty adviser. To obtain teacher licensure in Maine, a candidate must pass both two state-run "Praxis" exams. In the catalogue, it is reported that Colby graduates have a 100% pass rate from 2009 to 2015.

Experiential and Co-Curricular Learning

Colby offers a rich array of programs and collections to connect in-class learning with practical experiences. The Colby College Museum of Art is a model of best practice. The collection itself is spectacular, and even more significant is how the curators reach out to bring faculty and students into the museum to use the collection for class sessions and research. As the self-study notes, last year almost 100 academic courses from 26 different departments used the collection in classes ranging from the arts, humanities, and languages, to the sciences and economics. The museum is student-friendly, with a dedicated space—the Landay Teaching Gallery—where students can study items from the collection not on display.

Students also have access to many experiential learning programs. Colby calls these programs “labs”—and several initiatives follow this model. The Center for the Arts and Humanities, established in 2012, offers support for humanistic experiential learning as “humanities labs” with course modules outside the classroom where classes conduct fieldwork, use GIS, cook historical dishes, and more. The Global Engagement Faculty Advisory Committee awards support for “global labs” and “Global Innovation courses”; these engage students in internationally focused experiences in and out of class. One such course on American art added a component on that art’s global context, taking students to study relevant collections in Boston and at the Smithsonian; another connected a study-abroad course back to campus, bringing members of a Ugandan NGO to campus after students had worked with them while studying in Africa. Finally, the Goldfarb Center for Public Affairs and Civic Engagement provides support for faculty and student involvement in the city of Waterville and beyond; the new Colby initiative in downtown Waterville will reinvigorate this commitment.

Student Research Opportunities

Colby has developed several types of opportunities for students to pursue in-depth research with faculty and with off-campus organizations. The January Program is notable for how effectively it is used to support this research, either by giving students time to work with faculty on campus to do the research for the senior thesis, or to pursue a research experience at a partner institution such as the Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences. In summer, many students stay on campus as research assistants, and that experience culminates in a two-day research retreat off campus. Incoming students from disadvantaged backgrounds are given the opportunity to spend six weeks on campus in the summer before their first year to participate in a science-focused program combining course work with lab-based research under the guidance of faculty mentors who continue a mentoring program throughout each student’s four years at Colby. The Senior Scholars Program, in place since 1953, offers a structured plan for seniors to dedicate significant time to independent research projects outside of regular departmental offerings. During the Evaluation Team’s visit, Colby faculty emphasized their pride in these research opportunities, seeing them as the signature of the academic program.

Integrity in the Award of Credit Hours: The Evaluation Team reviewed course syllabi and met with the Academic Affairs Committee, the provost, and the registrar to determine Colby's practices with regard to the awarding of credit hours. The course syllabi reflected an appropriate correspondence between course numbering and increasing complexity and challenge as students progressed through the disciplines from the 100 to the 400 level. One hundred-level courses drew more heavily on short writing assignments, more frequent assessment, and instructor-guided lecture or discussion. In contrast, four hundred-level courses were often in seminar format, with student-led discussion, term-long research projects, portfolios, and presentations. Many 400-level courses engaged students in capstone work that was then shared in the campus-wide Colby Liberal Arts Symposium. Course approvals are vetted through the Academic Affairs Committee, which monitors the credit hours assigned to a given course.

Credit levels for courses are stated clearly in the Course Catalogue and in the course schedule that students use to select courses. Of the college's courses, 88.6 percent are 4-credit courses; 1-credit courses include credit for faculty-approved internships. Of the courses offered, 80.9 percent have between 3 and 5.9 hours a week of in-class contact; 13.8 percent have 6 hours or more; and 5.3 percent have fewer than 3 hours. Although 56 percent of Colby courses do not meet the federal standard of 1-to-1 ratio of "seat time" to credits, the average deficit per course is 15 hours across the entire semester (approximately 1 hour short per week). Colby students take 128 credits to graduate, which exceeds the federal standard of 120 credits. These 128 credits yield an average seat time of 1,850 hours, which goes beyond the 1,800 hours required by the federal standard. It should also be noted that Colby students graduate with an average of 136 credits, translating into a total number of seat time hours that is far above the federal standard. Despite these high averages, there are still a large percentage of courses that have lower number of class-time hours than the federal standard would dictate. Nevertheless, discussion with the faculty and registrars indicate that these courses supplement the in-class meeting time with group projects, study groups, lecture attendance, film screenings, and performances that add additional meaningful educational hours.

Transfer credits are processed through a review by the Office of the Registrar. Semester courses from other accredited institutions are typically assigned 4 credits. Any courses that raise concerns are directed to departments for further review and recommendation.

Other than anecdotal reports from students in their conversations with faculty members and deans, Colby has no systematic metric of determining the rigor of its courses or the exact amount of out-of-classroom time that students spend on their reading, written assignments, and class-related activities. The increasing emphasis on capstone work and participation in the Liberal Arts Symposium point to strong expectations for students to build up the capacity for independent and sophisticated intellectual work by the time they graduate.

5. Students

There is no doubt that students are at the center of Colby's focus today. New leadership, new initiatives, new students and families, and new facilities have catapulted the college in a variety of ways. All of these efforts are designed to put students first and to give them a transformational college experience that benefits them far beyond their time on campus. All of this was evident to the Evaluation Team.

Admissions: Colby has achieved a great deal in the area of admissions and financial aid since President Greene took office. The changes that have been made in staffing, process, financial commitment, and prospective student engagement and recruitment are commendable. The many new initiatives have been fruitful in critical ways in changing the campus landscape and in the talent and demeanor of incoming students. Specific efforts have included broadening the pool of potential students, committing to meeting 100 percent of need-based aid, attracting a more diverse student body, and building a successful admissions team that has brought professional knowledge, skill and talent. These efforts have been supplemented by the increased and more effective use of data. The college is now focused on increasing the support structures to aid in the success of these new students once they arrive. Attracting stronger students who are more intellectually capable and curious is a good way to change the intellectual and social climate on a campus.

According to the Data First Forms, the number of applications has more than doubled in three years (from 5,148 in fall 2013 to 11,190 in fall 2016), while the median combined SAT score increased by 50 points. With a yield rate that remained stable at 27.7-33.2% and an increase in first-year enrollment of about 10% to 525 students, the acceptance rate decreased from 28% to 15.7%. Over a longer period, Colby has increased the diversity of its incoming classes (comparing Classes of 2015 and 2021: 18% to 28% students of color, 39% to 47% financial aid recipients, and 12% to 14% Pell recipients).

It is clear the administration sees value in these important steps designed to strengthen the student body and to foster an intellectual climate that is more vibrant and relevant. They are designed to make the Colby experience a better one for all students. The college may want to consider initiatives that will engage these students more deeply with each other; opportunities for a cohort-based program do exist.

Student Services and Co-Curricular Experiences: As noted in Colby's self-study, the college faces many key challenges in the area of student life. At times, it was difficult for the Evaluation Team to discern how much progress has been made in certain areas of student services, as some of the new programs and initiatives are only in their first weeks and months of being launched on campus. It was very clear to the team that the staff who work in student service functions are *very* dedicated to the students' success and therefore to the success of Colby as a whole. The excitement, dedication, and loyalty of these staff members were all prevalent during our conversations and discussions. The students with whom the team met were smart, engaging, and passionate about their experience both in and out of the classroom.

While the new program and staffing structure are still too new to determine if the efforts will have the impact Colby desires on the student experience, there are clear strengths in this area. Among them are passionate, loyal, and engaged students. While the team was able to meet only a handful of soon-to-be graduates, it was clear their experience was a transformational one. They felt they could engage fully in their Colby experience, whether it be through serving as residence hall staff, on student government, or in intercollegiate athletics.

Also, worth noting are the dedicated members of staff in the student services area within the Office of the Dean of the College. While they are a small group, their knowledge of Colby, awareness of the challenges in student life, and willingness to try to make things better were evident. The challenges in this area most consistently mentioned were limited resources, not enough staff in the right places, and lack of a campus culture for evening, weekend, and late- night campus engagement.

Colby possesses a vibrant campus life that includes artists, lectures, performance, and athletic contests. There are facilities that allow for students to study, play, and coordinate co-curricular and social activities, although they don't seem to be used to their full potential. Challenges exist with students not always feeling at home where they live or demonstrating respect for living spaces, and not always finding a full array of social opportunities and activities on the weekends and especially at night. The Evaluation Team noted that members of the college community recognize that there is a strong drinking culture at Colby. During multiple meetings with Team members, the following examples of alcohol abuse were noted during vandalism in residence halls and apartments, and a more general feeling that campus culture that expects students will drink. Trained professional staff managing and supervising campus life, specifically in residential life and student activities, would likely lessen the potential risk and liability for the institution.

While resources have been allocated for student success, such as through Global Colby initiatives, DavisConnects, and the new athletic facilities, it appears the residence halls are not as well maintained or utilized in a way that allows for an environment conducive to sleep and study. Students also expressed concern about the move to the new downtown building on Main Street. While excitement for the concept is real, there is also the potential for disruptive behavior as students go back and forth from town to campus. These issues should be addressed as strategically; otherwise the idea of Colby into Main Street will not be achieved. The intentional move to prioritize space for faculty over student affairs staff in residence halls, while an interesting one, is also not typical as faculty are not usually trained in managing crises, dealing with student development issues and concerns, or assisting with programming in residential settings. Providing a presence and intellectual programming, and serving as a resource, while valuable, may not meet the day-to-day needs of today's residential students on college campuses.

The Main Street building initiative also includes creating space for civic engagement and community outreach; however, a concrete plan is yet to be developed.

The Pugh Center is an important presence on campus that is staffed to provide space, support, and programming for the college's many diverse groups. At the same time, there is concern that it may foster silos or barriers between groups and the rest of campus. Students from under-represented groups shared reflections with the Evaluation team of not being satisfied with their college life experience, of support structures not always working, and losing friends who leave Colby to go elsewhere. Students and staff mentioned the need for funding, resources, and additional staff to support the programs, initiatives, and community-building activities the Pugh Center is designed to offer.

Overall retention is good, and Colby is focused on improving a somewhat lower retention rate for students of color, as well as monitoring rates of academic dismissal. which recently implemented admission strategies and support structures hopefully will address. The college's commitment to creating a seamless experience for students, providing the advising and support they need, and having in place policies and practices to support these structures is clear. Again, many of the initiatives are too new to assess, however the college's strong commitment to them and to creating an appropriate staffing structure are steps in the right direction.

Efforts have also been made to address the growing needs of students in the areas of physical health, mental health, and wellness. The college's wellness requirement provides an opportunity for intentional skill building, education about healthy habits, and taking time to reflect on experiences. To ensure the success of this new model, though, may require additional resources given the student issues noted above. An intentional first- and second-year program could, too, be worth considering.

Athletics is a vital part of the Colby community, with a third of students participating in varsity sports. Positive aspects of the athletics program include: Membership in the New England Small College Athletic Conference (NESCAC), having coaches with faculty status, and dual reporting lines organizationally in both the Division of Enrollment and the Provost's Office.

Also underway is a strategic planning process that includes the assessment of student experiences, programs, and facilities as a priority.

The Colby Affirmation

The Colby Affirmation is aspirational as much as it is practical and it could be an influential tool in more fully creating a culture on campus dedicated to the environment it describes. While students sign their names committing to the Colby Affirmation, its full realization given aspects of the current student culture on campus could be questioned. Conducting focus groups of students, by class year, could provide useful information from students about their understanding and sense of obligation to fulfilling the pledge.

6. *Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship*

Faculty and Academic Staff: It is clear from all the information available, and from our many conversations on campus, that Colby's faculty are both well qualified and dedicated to the mission of the college. A constant theme from students was how much they value and appreciate the faculty. Colby has 185 full-time and 23 part-time faculty members; 99 percent of full-time faculty hold the terminal degree in their field, and their professional accomplishments are evident in their CVs and online profiles, in the college website's frequent reports on their accomplishments, and in the profiles that accompany many of the overseers' reports. In addition to a teaching load of five courses per year for full-time faculty (with an option to teach in the January Program), faculty are expected to serve as advisers and mentors to students; to conduct research or be active professionally within their discipline; to participate in course development and planning within departments and programs; and to serve on committees in departments, in the college, and with the Board of Trustees. The full-time faculty has grown appreciably in the past 10 years, from 157 to 185; at the same time, the number of part-time faculty has decreased from 69 to 23. These changes are signs of the college's longstanding commitment to and support for the faculty as a whole. At the heart of their work is their dedication as teachers and their close attention to students: the faculty-to-student ratio is 10-to-1, and, in our conversations with them, we heard they would like to keep it that way.

The self-study is also quick to acknowledge the crucial role that academic staff play in the work of teaching and supporting students. The staff who run the Colby Writing Program, the Colby Center for Teaching and Learning, and many other related offices impressed the Evaluation Team with their extraordinary energy, vision, and dedication to their work. In each case, those staff appear to work supremely well with their constituencies, helping to sustain faculty learning over time and to deliver an extraordinary liberal arts education for students. These staff are hired through national searches, and they are reviewed annually.

Full-time faculty, too, are hired in a national search and are reviewed in processes that are appropriate to the nature of their appointments. The processes are spelled out in the Faculty Handbook. Students complete course evaluations online in a process that yields about 80 percent return; faculty also are observed teaching by peers, and for review and tenure they compile a file of materials that reflect multiple aspects of their teaching. The Faculty Handbook details the processes for reappointment, tenure, and promotion; they follow standard good practices. We confirmed in conversations with the Committee on Promotion and Tenure that these processes are taken with the utmost seriousness and sense of fairness and equity.

In addition to increasing the full-time faculty, Colby has changed its hiring processes to recruit and attract a more diverse faculty. In 2016-17, 5 of the 14 tenure-track hires were people of color, and 6 were women in STEM fields or economics. Both administrators and faculty voiced a commitment to continuing this process. The self-study notes, however—and our conversations confirmed—that some faculty of color and female faculty do not experience Colby as a welcoming place. The faculty we met with, in various groups, seem

committed to bringing about some changes in response to the Colby Campus Climate survey results that indicate discontent. The survey results have not yet been disseminated or discussed broadly; the team did have access to them on campus. In our conversations, there seemed to be no dissent about the proposal in the self-study that Colby needs to reflect more deeply on unspoken assumptions, and to act more proactively to retain the new cohorts of faculty who are being recruited. That process is still in its beginning stages, though there seems to be a great deal of goodwill and intention.

In addition to concerns about equity and inclusion in hiring and personnel processes, the self-study touches on two themes that also resonated in our conversations with faculty: salaries, benefits, and professional support; and faculty workload.

Salaries, Benefits, and Professional Support

The self-study makes it clear that Colby's leadership has a steady eye on peer practices and has worked to keep Colby's average salaries well positioned with respect to all liberal arts colleges and, more particularly, within NESCAC. Within those 11 schools, Colby's salaries and total compensation hover around the middle for all faculty levels. Although male full professors continue to average more than females, this is accounted for by a difference in years at the college; on the whole, then, faculty salaries have been balanced out by the leadership to be equitable with respect to gender.

Professional support is also generous by general standards and more or less comparable to other NESCAC schools. Although some of the peer colleges provide more frequent sabbaticals, Colby's sabbaticals of one semester at full pay or two semesters at 80 percent pay every seventh year are comparable to many of its peers. Travel funds for professional meetings and scholarly projects are similarly appropriate, as are start-up funding and space for laboratories and offices. There seems to be increasing energy for supporting faculty grant applications, with an enviable success rate in the past year.

In our conversations, some faculty expressed general satisfaction with the level of support provided by the college; others noted that the faculty development and travel funding had not been increased in some years.

The team would like to mention that although the self-study reports on the kinds of funding and support provided to faculty, scholarly and professional activity was not noted as a driving energy and value at the college.

Faculty Workload

The most persistent theme in our conversations with faculty was that workload is a nagging problem. The self-study says that this was a problem a decade ago during the previous re-accreditation. It came up again and again with faculty, with two motifs: they would like to return to discussions of a four-course load; and they acknowledge that some of their time-honored processes are unusually labor-intensive and time-consuming.

Many faculty noted, as does the self-study, that although information was gathered recently about how departments might reconfigure the faculty teaching load to four courses, that

information did not yield a clear way forward, and further work on the question has been tabled while the Distribution Requirement Task Force does its work. The task force has been working for two years at this point doing significant groundwork but without producing a concrete proposal. In the Evaluation Team's meeting with task force members, it seemed unlikely that the complex question of how the requirements might be revised is going to be resolved soon, consistent with the team's experience that curricular revision of this sort can be a multi-year process at best.

In most of our meetings where faculty were present, we heard about their experience of feeling too short on time to meet all of the college's expectations. Some of the processes at Colby are such that they require considerable faculty time: service on Board of Trustee committees; an unusually large Promotion and Tenure Committee; large numbers of task forces and working groups; and a perceived shortage of support staff in some areas. As pressures have mounted to increase scholarly productivity, to seek external funding, to attend frequent workshops and trainings, and to do assessments and track data, many faculty seem to feel that they cannot keep up.

The team also noticed that there does not appear to be funding targeted in the upcoming comprehensive campaign to address issues of faculty workload, although the self-study recommends considering the change to a four-course load that is more typical of Colby's aspirational peers.

Teaching and Learning: In our meetings with faculty, staff, and administrators, we perceived that Colby has fostered a strong culture of collaboration and collegiality. The environment for teaching and learning is one in which innovation is encouraged and supported, and faculty appear to seek out collaborations of various kinds. The team perceived a lively interest in interdisciplinary interests and programs, which the college supports. There was also broad support for the ten precepts, the functioning goals for student learning, which were adopted in 1989 and are still meaningful to the faculty. Although the Task Force on Distribution Requirements is revisiting the precepts, the sense is that they are not being considered for a real overhaul—perhaps just some modest revisions. The precepts continue to drive the faculty's sense of what Colby students should learn, not just in their general education courses but also in their majors and their electives. Departments have mapped their own goals to the precepts at the level of the major and the individual course.

The Academic Collaborative—the Center for Teaching and Learning, the Colby Writing Program, the Academic ITS, the library, and the advising deans—works with the faculty and in support of the faculty to deliver the teaching and learning that the precepts outline. The team found ample signs that they do so effectively. The vibrant Center for Teaching and Learning, now in its second year, has hosted substantial programs with lively participation and response. The Colby Writing Program hosts the college's most consistent and ambitious direct assessment of student learning in its annual faculty assessment of student writing, a process that also serves to inculcate faculty into the collaborative project of teaching students to write well. Other academic centers—the Goldfarb Center, the emerging DavisConnects, the library—amplify and support other dimensions of student

learning. Taken as a whole, these thriving enterprises complement the Colby classrooms and labs as impressive elements in a general culture of teaching and learning.

Two other elements in that culture bear mentioning. At Colby, coaches are currently considered faculty, and a third of the student body are involved in a varsity sport, a figure we heard often, and therefore conclude that coaches are a valuable and important complement to classroom faculty and academic staff. Given the dramatic improvement in athletic facilities that is under way, the athletic program is likely to become even more prominent in students' lives. Perhaps the teaching dimension of coaches' roles could be revisited and developed along with other faculty development programs.

We also single out the Colby Art Museum as an extraordinary resource for teaching and learning. The value of the collections, the spaces, and the expertise of the staff cannot be overstated.

In many other ways, Colby follows standard good practices in its culture of teaching and learning. Students' opportunities for collaborative research with faculty are exemplary, both during term time and during the summer. The Colby Liberal Arts Symposium impressed the Evaluation Team as an effective way to make student accomplishments visible and to build a community of scholars.

Colby also follows standard practices with respect to advising. The self-study notes that a transition is just now under way to a class dean system for advising that may provide opportunities to relieve some of the time burden for faculty. The self-study also suggests that Colby lags a bit behind peers on advising; some of that could be related to faculty time shortages. It also may come from unequal distribution of advising responsibilities; the advising load ranges from 1 to 66 students. If faculty members need to take on too many advisees, the quality of advising could suffer for some students.

Chapter 6 of the self-study identifies four projections for further steps: exploring reducing the teaching load, addressing campus climate issues for faculty and staff, developing a strategic plan for academic advising, and extending the work of the Academic Collaborative. The team finds these proposals to be well supported by the evidence in the self-study, the Data First forms, the documents, and our meetings and conversations throughout the visit.

7. Institutional Resources

Human Resources: Over the past several years, based on comparisons with other institutions and identified needs and opportunities, Colby has provided increased resources to enhance staffing levels. According to Human Resources (HR) records, the college has added approximately 104 positions over the past four fiscal years (FY 2015-18). These positions were spread throughout the college with academic support (18.0 FTE), advancement (16.8), athletics (11.9), teaching faculty (9.6), and the museum (9.0) being the

largest beneficiaries of these new investments. These increased resources should help position the college to better execute its stated mission and strategic objectives.

Colby utilizes a performance management process for administrators and staff that helps ensure alignment between employee performance and departmental objectives; the process is flexible enough to provide supervisors with the ability to be creative in the ways in which they develop their staff. This process largely has been institutionalized and the expectation understood by supervisors and managers that they are responsible for completing these reviews annually. HR tracks compliance with annual submission requirements as well as for employees hired who are in their probationary period.

From a technology perspective, Colby's Human Resources Department website is well organized, is simple to use, and provides a wealth of informational resources to support the work of departments across the college. This includes information on employment opportunities, relocation support, benefits information, risk management and other policies, employee development opportunities, performance management guidance, and many other areas. As was identified in the self-study and confirmed in meetings with college personnel, the human resources system is antiquated and in need of replacement in order to improve access to data, generate meaningful reports, and eliminate manual processes. The college is currently evaluating options for replacement of the existing system alongside similar discussions of Colby's finance and student records systems. The cost of these system implementations has not yet been identified nor built into the college's long-range capital plans.

In response to needs identified in the employee development area, the college recently added a professional development position to the Human Resources Department. This new position is focused on improving the coordination of training needs across the college and works with individual departments to develop training curricula for targeted opportunity areas. The position also has worked on improving the college's onboarding process for new hires in order to help acclimate them to their work at Colby. By all accounts, the feedback on the impact this new position has had on the campus community has been overwhelmingly positive.

Financial Resources: Colby is financially well-resourced and has the capacity to support its mission. For the past three decades, the college has produced balanced budgets through conservative planning practices and assumptions. With the development of the current strategic planning document, Eminent Colby, the college is consciously taking on more financial risk in its planning models in order to implement the associated strategic initiatives. In 2015, the college issued \$100 million in taxable bonds with a long-dated, bullet maturity, the proceeds from which were placed in a strategic investment fund. The vast majority of this fund is being targeted for the proposed athletics center (\$80 million). The college is targeting approximately \$120 million in philanthropic support for the athletic center. The costs of many of the strategic initiatives are front loaded in the financial plan, creating pro-forma planning deficits over the duration of the planning horizon (ranging from \$4.6 million in FY2019 to \$8.9 million in FY2026), which will be partially offset through draws from the strategic investment fund. In order to help support

the need for additional resources, the college has increased its endowment spending formula from 4.5 percent to 5.5 percent of a trailing 5-year average. This translates into roughly a 5 percent utilization rate, which falls within both the recent historical performance (compound annual investment returns of 5.9 and 6 percent over the past 5- and 10-year periods, respectively) as well as the Investment Office's expected real return of 6 percent over a long duration. The five-year averaging provides stability to the operating budget for normal market fluctuations, and the Finance and Investment Offices work to ensure that adequate balance sheet liquidity is maintained.

In recent years, the college has taken special draws from its quasi-endowment in order to fund the increase in campaign staffing. The increased spending formula rate and special draws on the quasi-endowment funds could pose a challenge to the college's ability to preserve the endowment's purchasing power in the short run, however, management expressed a high level of confidence in its ability to generate returns over the long run that will help ensure that intergenerational equity is maintained. To maintain balanced budgets, on top of the adjustments made in endowment spending, the college is considering a range of options, including the addition of approximately 200 students (to 2,100), an increase in the comprehensive fee of 1.75 percent above inflation, further draws on the strategic investment fund, support from the campaign, and re-allocation of existing resources. Each of these approaches carries some level of risk that the college will need to assess as it implements initiatives with large fixed-cost ramifications.

For the FY2018 budget, the college set aside an additional \$1.25 million in financial aid funding. FY2018 represented the third year of funding (out of four) for financial aid that targets improved yield on the most highly ranked students (academic 8s and 9s). Similar to prior years, FY2018 saw funding increased for strategic priorities supporting: 1) new tenure-track faculty positions; 2) grant-funded positions in environmental humanities and the writing program; 3) new positions supporting the Oak Institute, Global Engagement, and high-end academic computing; 4) increased staffing for the fundraising campaign; and 5) operating support for other areas across campus.

Colby's Board of Trustees is actively engaged in its oversight responsibilities for the college's budget and its long-term financial projections. The management team prepared pro-forma projections supporting the strategic plan that helped form the basis for the college's movement forward on implementing the various strategic investments noted above. The board approves the annual budget, the stated comprehensive fee, debt issuance, and large capital projects. Financial aid expenditures are reviewed with the Board of Trustees, as are key metrics related to the academic quality of incoming students and student financial profiles.

The college's operating budget is developed through a transparent and participative process that allows various departments the opportunity to identify and make known funding requests that fall outside of routine budget increments. These requests are reviewed and considered by the Budget Committee against the backdrop of funding requirements for strategic initiatives and other operating funding requirements. Mission alignment in the allocation of resources is ensured through dialogue, budget process

transparency, approvals by the president and the Board of Trustees, and ongoing reporting of budget to actual results and progress reporting on strategic plan implementation.

Based on the most recently completed audit of Colby's financial statements, the auditors noted no material weaknesses or significant concerns about the college's internal control environment. There were a few findings noted with respect to management and operational areas, but these were minor and within the normal course of business for an operation of Colby's size and complexity. The college employs a conflict of interest policy with applicability to officers and members of the Board of Trustees. It also maintains a code of conduct policy that articulates the institution's expectations concerning ethical behavior at Colby. Other operating policies with respect to financial management are available on the college's website.

In recent years, Colby has increased its focus and improved resources in the area of institutional risk management. In 2016, the college hired a full-time director of risk management, retained a full-time director of information security, purchased cyber risk liability insurance, and hired an academic safety specialist. The college maintains a listing of key institutional risk areas broken down by area of responsibility. This risk matrix is shared with the Audit Subcommittee of the board and provides a snapshot of the types of risks that each area is managing. The college also utilizes many outside advisers in the course of its operations that provide external views on risk and risk management activities. The current process appears to provide sufficient reporting of institutional risks to senior leadership and the Board of Trustees.

Colby's financial statements are prepared by management in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, and audits are conducted by an independent auditor, Mayer, Hoffman, McCann P.C. For fiscal 2016, the most recent year for which audited financial statements were available, Colby received a clean, unqualified opinion from its external auditors. The auditors meet with members of the Audit Subcommittee of the Board of Trustees prior to each engagement to review their audit work plan, and then again at the end of each audit to review their findings and present their report. An executive session is held between members of the audit firm and members of the Audit Subcommittee, without management present, to discuss the audit and any matters that may be of relevance.

Colby College is in the process of expanding its fundraising operation in order to prepare for its next capital campaign. In doing so, it has hired 16 new advancement staff with a significant focus on direct gift officers. It also recently reviewed its campaign plan document, which lays out the rules for gift solicitation, acceptance, counting, and reporting. It is replete with valuation treatment for different types of gifts, a donor bill of rights that seeks to ensure that Colby's interests are not in conflict with those of the donor, a sample gift agreement, and a sample estate gift intention form. According to the vice president for college advancement, Colby relied on outside consultants to assist with identifying donor capacity, as well as assessing current staffing levels and the core functions required to enable the execution of the campaign. The campaign is currently in the leadership phase.

The college is rated by Standard & Poor's for its publicly issued debt securities. In 2015, Colby was downgraded to AA from AA+ based on the issuance of \$100 million in new debt and associated changes in its underlying financial ratios relative to similar peers within the rating category. It maintains a stable outlook at this new rating level, which is a strong investment grade rating. The S&P report noted the college's relatively high tuition dependency relative to peer institutions and underscored that any further weakening in financial ratios or consistent operating deficits could trigger a further rating review and possible downgrade. The report also noted the college's relatively strong student demand profile and low tuition discount rate as factors in its current rating level assignment. In addition to the external reviews by S&P, the auditors, and other select external consultants, the college prepares analyses based on external inputs from IPEDS, AAUP, and other sources in order to inform decision-making. These include comparisons of comprehensive charges, faculty salaries, tuition discount rates, student debt loads, endowment returns and spending rates, and many other metrics. These external comparisons help management and the board place decision-making within the context of the broader environment, guide improvements in execution, or make adjustments in approach or strategy.

Information, Physical and Technical Resources

Information Resources

Colby completed a Planning Study for the Colby College Libraries in August of 2016. Key findings included library expenditures per student being higher than the average for Colby's comparable peers, indicating a level of investment that would appear sufficient to support its teaching and learning environments. The report indicated that Colby is particularly well situated, relative to its peers with respect to materials, services, and operations, and in the number of library seats per student. Colby employs a more efficient facility and staffing model in the libraries than its peers as measured in comparison to the size of the student body. The report identified several short- and long-term options for consideration as the college addresses concerns raised by the study, including indirect access to collections, unreliable technology and digital tools, lack of visual presence of the stacks, diversification of study space settings, and amenities and comfort. The January 2017 Library Planning Group Report indicated that "the Colby libraries are budgeted, resourced, and staffed comparably (and in several cases favorably) to our aspirational peers when accounting for differences in institutional size and wealth."

Physical Resources

Colby's facilities consist of 60 buildings spread across more than 700 acres. Recent renovations and additions include:

- Construction of the Alford-Lunder Family Pavilion and renovation of the Colby Museum of Art
- Construction of the Davis Science Center
- Renovations to the Roberts Row residence halls and the Roberts Union building
- Renovation of the Miller Library and construction of an annex and storage building
- Expansion of the central heating plant to include two biomass boilers

- Construction of new fields and facilities, construction of a new observatory, and renovation of the bookstore

In keeping with future expansion of its physical plant, the college reviewed the core components of its campus master plan and created a new campus framework to inform future development. Projects considered include the new athletic complex and fields and a center for arts and innovation, both of which stem directly from the college's strategic plan. Other aspects of the framework address longer-term needs for parking, circulation, landscape improvements, and community gathering spaces. In addition to the on-campus framework, the college also has initiated, with the partnership of other outside agencies, a revitalization project in downtown Waterville. This project supports Colby's strategic aim of creating a vibrant downtown in partnership with civic, business, and community leaders. The college is targeting a \$30 million investment in this project which, when completed, is expected to have a total project cost of approximately \$45 million.

The Physical Plant Department relies on internal and external studies to assess the state of college facilities. For example, the college recently completed a facilities condition index (FCI) with the assistance of VHA, which provides an inventory of deferred maintenance items broken down by building and by major component. This information will inform future investments and be paired with ongoing planning for space and renovation projects. Over the planning horizon, the college is reducing its annual funding level (from 2 percent to 1.5 percent of replacement value) for renovation allocation, which is the primary source of funding from the operating budget for annual renewal, replacement, alteration, and renovation projects. In the short term, management believes that, through re-prioritization, the impacts of this reduced funding level should be manageable. Over the longer term, the college should also plan to re-assess its facilities condition index to determine the impact on deferred maintenance levels.

Colby has a stated goal of constructing all new buildings to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards in keeping with broader institutional sustainability goals. The college recently entered into an external power purchase agreement whereby it leased a portion of its land for installation of a solar array that will satisfy approximately 16 percent of Colby's electricity needs. The renewable energy credits (RECs) associated with this project are available to Colby to sell on the open market or to reduce other RECs that the college is purchasing to meet its carbon neutrality goals.

The Physical Plant Department increasingly utilizes technology in the execution of its responsibilities, including the installation of a new preventative maintenance and work-order solution that provides a mobile platform for workers in the field. The AVP for physical plant is looking to take advantage of turnover and retirements to upgrade positions to better reflect changes in the skillsets required to maintain the increasingly complex and computerized building systems. Recruitment of individuals with these skill sets in central Maine has been challenging; however, the administration has been supportive of the recruiting steps and budget necessary to attract these future employees to Colby.

Technological Resources

The Information Technology Services Department (ITS) is centralized and has an annual operating budget for FY2018 of \$6.1 million, representing a 2.5 percent increase over FY2017 funding levels. In addition, the ITS capital budget for FY2018 is \$3.2 million, funded from the college's renovation allocation. The capital budget in future years has place holders ranging from \$1.3 million to \$3.5 million for the non-major capital improvements covering routine systems upgrades, network infrastructure improvements, classroom technology enhancements, computer and laptop replacements, and other items. This funding level has remained relatively stable and enables the college to provide the tools and the atmosphere conducive to study and research. High-speed Wi-Fi access is readily available throughout campus, and classrooms are equipped with modern audio-visual presentation set-ups.

The college has invested in several best-in-class systems that support functional areas. These include Raiser's Edge (advancement), Slate (admissions), and PowerFAIDS (financial aid). The feedback from employees indicated these products are performing well and that reporting on underlying data is vastly improved over previous systems' capabilities. Future efforts will focus on better integration of databases from underlying systems and enhanced reporting capabilities. It became apparent from several sources that Colby will need to spend some time on data governance and on making sure that future technology and system investments are maximally utilized through common data definitions and integrated databases. The college also is evaluating potential solutions for replacement of the enterprise system for finance, human resources, and student records, a system that is approximately 30 years old and very customized.

8. Educational Effectiveness

The Colby Plan, consisting of a mission statement and 10 educational precepts, is the guiding framework for Colby's assessment of educational effectiveness. The plan is a thoughtful and thorough articulation of a contemporary liberal arts education, emphasizing both time-honored capacities for critical interpretation, written expression, and quantitative analysis, while also encouraging study abroad, community engagement, and meaningful encounter with cultural difference.

Examination of the Overseers Visiting Committee reports, departmental self-studies, departmental curricular reviews, and course-level curriculum reviews, as well as consultation with the Academic Affairs Committee, indicates an intentional and systematic translation of the mission statement and precepts into the learning outcomes for Colby's students within departmental majors and across disciplines. As stipulated in the Commission's response to the 2012 interim report, Colby has strengthened its efforts to target the direct connection between learning outcomes in specific courses and overall programmatic and institutional goals. The mapping of 2011 and 2014 NSSE results (based on a 3-year rotation of NSSE data collection) to Colby precepts also evaluates Colby student learning outcomes, using peer comparisons as a benchmark. The Provost's Office and the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) have made significant progress in

bringing all departments on board for engaging in more extensive assessment procedures and in making more direct usage of the NSSE data to inform curricular changes. Increased staffing in both of these offices is currently planned to build on the existing momentum. One critical factor yet to be determined is how regularly departmental curricular reviews will take place and what might be their role in departmental annual reports. As mentioned by staff in the Provost's Office and OIRA, another area of concern is that the data system platform for institutional research is not sufficiently up to date, causing analyses across the institution to be highly time-consuming and cumbersome.

Standard of Achievement

Colby has clearly stated distribution and graduation requirements that appear on its website and in its college catalogue. All departments provide mission statements and specify learning outcomes along with requirements for the fulfillment of the majors and minors specific to that department and/or program in the course catalogue. However, many departments did not list these learning outcomes on the departmental pages that appear on the college's website. A review of syllabi indicates that courses are slotted at levels of increasing challenge (from 100 to 300, with 400-level courses focusing on advanced seminars, independent study, and honors research) and that instructors are providing content and measuring achievement appropriate to the undergraduate degree. In addition, some departments also receive certification for their majors from external review boards (American Chemical Society, ACS, and American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, ASBMB, reviews in chemistry and the Maine Department of Education accreditation in education).

The college's recent strategic planning document, *Eminent Colby*, has set the top 10 liberal arts colleges in the nation as Colby's peer comparison group and the college is aspiring to admit and graduate students at the highest level of intellectual accomplishment. One area in which it seeks to reach a higher standard of achievement is in the awarding of post-graduate national and international fellowships. Although its aspirational peer group ranged from 75 to 179 fellowships awarded over the period 2007 to 2016, Colby graduates received a total of 33. According to Colby's self-study, its graduates achieve entrance into similarly highly ranked Ph.D. programs as their aspirational peer group, but do not do as well at enrollment in highly ranked graduate and professional degree programs that offer other degrees. The dean of the college and Office of the Provost have identified improvement in both of these outcomes as a significant goal in the next five-year period.

Assessment

There is an admirable coherence in Colby's approach to its assessment of student learning outcomes. The presence of the Colby Plan—its mission and precepts—is palpable at all levels of the academic program. General education distribution requirements, departmental mission statements and curricula, and course syllabi are all now aligned with a review process that is informed by their relationship to the mission and precepts. Department curricular reviews illustrate the explicit linkage of the course goals and learning outcomes to the Colby Plan precepts. At the level of departmental review, two clear examples can be found in the Psychology Department. In order to assess precept 7's emphasis on the exploration of experimental methods, the department gathered a sample

of final papers from several sections of “Psychology 215, Research Methods,” and from upper-level research seminars to evaluate students’ grasp of the formulation of hypotheses, experimental design, appropriate data analytic strategies, and resulting conclusions. Their findings helped to confirm that the departmental goals of teaching fundamental competence in psychological research were being accomplished. Working with the OIRA, the department also examined the relationship of Moodle usage (a web-based course platform that contains readings, postings, and ancillary course-relevant materials) to graded outcomes in the same courses. This analysis revealed a strong correlation between extent of Moodle usage and the students’ numerical grades. Based on this assessment feedback, the department has begun to institute new practices that highlight the significance of Moodle engagement (connecting to precept 1 that emphasizes the capacity to articulate and share one’s ideas, as well as develop a capacity for independent work).

The Chemistry Department offers another illustration of how a departmental review in relation to the Colby precepts has yielded meaningful change in the curriculum. Examining its course content through the lens of precept 5 (to understand and reflect searchingly upon one’s own values and the values of others), the department now has added ethics modules to two required courses (“BC368, Biochemistry of the Cell” and “CH342, Physical Chemistry”), which ensures that all chemistry majors will engage with these topics. Chemistry also has introduced a one-semester General Chemistry course to replace its two-semester sequence, in part as a way to offer more sections of smaller size and to allow for more personalized instruction. This change also enables many more students who do not intend to major in chemistry to gain an introductory knowledge of the field (thus fulfilling the goals of precept 7).

Similarly, one can find multiple examples of course curricular reviews that highlight how learning outcomes are linked to specific precepts at the level of the individual course content. For example, a curricular review of the sequence of Spanish instruction courses (i.e., Spanish 126, 127, 128, etc.), documents how a precept, such as closely examining a culture other than one’s own (precept 3), is operationalized through class and group discussions of cultural variation among different Spanish-speaking countries and within Hispanic cultures in the United States.

These illustrations highlight the best practices of assessment that are in evidence for some, but not all, of the academic departments and programs. Examination of the departmental reviews reveals that while all departments have now completed a well-structured review rubric that encourages systematic mapping of the department’s course offerings’ relationship to the precepts, while also detailing methods of assessing learning outcomes and indicating how assessment has influenced the curricula and course design, many departments are still formulating concrete assessment strategies. Discussion with department chairs confirmed that there is variable commitment and enthusiasm for this enterprise. Nevertheless, the structure for developing more fine-tuned and quantitative assessments within departmental and course curricular reviews is clearly in place.

The mapping of NSSE results to the realization of the precepts' learning outcomes is another valuable source of assessment information. The 2014 data indicate that student self-reports point to significant success in Colby's learning goals, as determined by peer comparison benchmarks. Colby students significantly exceeded their peers in writing; doing research with a faculty member; preparing for and participating in class discussions; being challenged to do their best work; studying abroad; doing internships; and engaging in community service.

On the other hand, Colby first-year students were significantly different from their comparison peers in a cluster of learning outcomes that coalesce around a capacity for critical analysis, integrative thinking, perspective-taking, a capacity for engaging with difference, and development of skills related to working effectively with others. The gap in these areas is no longer present for Colby students by senior year, but it points to a meaningful difference in how Colby students move through their education in the first year. Concerns about advising raised in Standard 5 and the Distribution Requirements Task Force's work both point to the possibility that the absence of a first-year seminar program at Colby may play a role in the slower start Colby students have in realizing these critical dimensions of their education.

In addition to exploring the possible introduction of a first-year seminar, the Distribution Requirements Task Force has been engaged for the last two years in sustained investigation of general education at Colby. This investigation has explored the possibility of modifying the requirements to include a community engagement experience, study abroad experience, and/or technological literacy. Discussion with the task force members indicated that they are still in a data-gathering stage about possible refinements and have not built consensus with the faculty on a firm direction for modification. Additionally, mapping NSSE data to the precepts does not inform the institution as to whether the specific courses that satisfy the distribution requirements are aiding students in achieving the desired outcomes. For example, the task force does not have any current data on whether the two courses that address diversity in and outside the United States achieve one of the outcomes of precept 4, "to learn how each individual can confront intolerance." Similarly, it might be helpful to explore whether students who have achieved a 640 on an SAT subject test in a foreign language taken in high school, which then exempts the student from additional language study in college, are fulfilling precept 3, "to become acquainted with other cultures by learning a foreign language and by living and studying in another country or by closely examining a culture other than one's own." Based on the minutes from the Distribution Requirements Task Force meetings and the Evaluation Team's discussion with the task force members, this group is still in the process of analyzing these questions and will need to engage in further assessment of the current requirements.

A more developed form of general education assessment is the Colby Writing Program (CWP), established after the 2009 re-accreditation follow-up report. The CWP introduced a writing requirement for all students and has systematically assessed outcomes through NSSE results, senior survey questions, and repeated summative assessment of writing samples. CWP also has aided departments through workshops and consultation with building assignments, rubrics, portfolios, and peer review into departmental coursework.

CWP's success led to a second Davis grant that funds a writing-enriched curriculum program and multilingual writing support. A postdoctoral fellow will lead these programs as well as other writing initiatives funded through the grant. A meeting with the director of the CWP confirmed that this general education program is engaged in thorough and ongoing assessment that informs its learning goals, activities, and programming.

Based on the team's conversations with representatives from the Office of the Dean of the College, as well as the documents provided in the self-study, there aren't yet any formal assessment procedures in place for co-curricular activities at the college. The dean of the college has begun a process with her team of identifying goals and objectives for each of the areas of student life and inclusion, but this work is in its early stages.

Retention and Graduation Rates

Colby's first-year retention and graduation rates place it among the elite liberal arts colleges of the nation. Over the last 10 years, its overall retention rate has ranged from a low of 92.3 percent to a high of 95.3 percent, while its six-year graduation rate has ranged between 89 percent and 94 percent. Similar to nationwide trends for private liberal arts colleges, both the retention and graduation rates are expected to be slightly lower in the next several years, especially as the cost of education continues to put intense pressure on middle class families. After averaging well above 93 percent for the period of 2006 to 2012, first-year retention has slipped to below this mark for the last three years. There is also a six percent difference over the 2006 to 2010 period for average graduation rates between African-American students and white students (86 percent to 92 percent), a 4 percent difference for Asian-American students (88 percent), and a 2 percent difference for Hispanic students (90 percent).

Four to seven percent of Colby students who do not graduate have transferred to another institution and many cite distance from home as a primary reason. Additionally, CIRP data have revealed that the number of students who listed Colby as their first-choice school has declined from 65 percent to 55 percent from 2006 to 2016. However, the number of applications have increased 117% over the past 3 years. One possibility for this increase is the greater ease that the common application affords students to apply to multiple schools; another possibility is Colby's removal of the optional essay and application fee. Equally important is the impressive rise in Colby's *U.S. News* ranking and national reputation. These advances have led Colby to position itself as a peer in the market of the most highly selective liberal arts colleges. It is possible that this has increased the number of students who have chosen Colby after not receiving acceptance at the most elite institutions.

Another potential contributing factor appears to be the social life/campus climate. This was one area in which Colby scored significantly below its peers in the 2014 NSSE metrics. The self-study team, staff in the Office of the Dean of the College, and a number of long-term faculty with whom the Evaluation Team consulted, all raised the possibility that the disparity between academic excellence and social life satisfaction may be one factor in why, compared to their peers, both Colby first-year and senior students were significantly less convinced that they would choose Colby again if they were making their initial decision. Whatever the contribution of the various factors to retention might be, it is clear that the

Dean of the College's Office, the Admissions Office, the Office of the Provost, and OIRA are engaged in an in-depth exploration of retention and transfer influences.

Placement rates speak to great success for Colby graduates. The most recent annual report tracking placement data indicates that 90 percent of the Class of 2016 is either employed or in graduate school; an additional 1 percent had secured fellowships.

9. Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure

Integrity: Colby College has a high level of integrity, ethics, and honesty in its vision, goals and aspirations. It conveys this in its policies and procedures, its development of resources, its new leadership, and the aspiration to have an impact not only on the students who attend Colby but on the geographic region, especially the town of Waterville. The college has in place mechanisms to monitor and ensure the integrity of governance, academic integrity, and academic freedom. The self-study references the important role on campus of task forces, and these serve as a mechanism to bring together various stakeholders to address challenges, issues, and concerns; and to create intentional, strategic plans for implementing change. Task forces support the integrity of the process of making change, and they allow voices from across the campus to be heard and ideas to be shared. As one example, a new 2017-18 task force will examine issues related to free expression, allowing members of the college community to engage in dialogue and to build knowledge and awareness.

Colby's willingness to make an internal assessment of key issues speaks to the overall integrity of the college as an institution and to its commitment to making Colby a better place. It does this in a way that allows members of the community to lead, to engage in honest and open dialogue, and to create recommendations for a better future.

The Colby Affirmation is another example of the college's commitment to integrity. This statement articulates all that Colby wants its students to aspire to. It serves as a unifying umbrella for the college's code of conduct, its social policies, and its academic expectations. At its core is the spirit of integrity expected among the members of the Colby community. While early indications suggest that the Colby Affirmation has been embraced across campus in a variety of ways, the Evaluation Team suggests that more work could be done to truly integrate the affirmation into campus life. While the affirmation is in place for students, there does not seem to be an integrity policy for faculty. As Colby makes further progress on creating an integrated and seamless experience for students both in and out of the classroom, having policies that are parallel to each other will help in sustaining a strong environment with integrity as a core value.

When there is a high level of loyalty, dedication, and commitment to an organization with such high aspirations for integrity, it can be easy in times of rapid change to forget that change must be actively managed and that fatigue can set in. The Evaluation Team heard a sense of excitement among staff, coupled with feelings of burnout, fatigue, and concern

over the pace of changes taking place and the sense that they don't have time to be thoughtful about their work and to utilize data to make informed, strategic decisions.

Transparency: Information about the college is readily available to the public through the college website. The Colby College Catalog is easily located on the site and begins with the mission, precepts, and values. It includes information about admissions, charges, student affairs and campus life, athletics, off-campus study, academic requirements, and details about courses, majors, and academic programs. The Registrar's Office website includes clear deadlines, and links to information about policies and procedures. The employment website is attractive and user-friendly and includes information about college benefits and about the region. Audited financial statements are available on the Finance Office page. Contact information is available throughout the website.

Print communications are attractive, accurately represent the college, and are consistent with electronic materials. The Communications Office staff reviews print content for accuracy as materials are produced. Although most offices have the authority to update their own websites, the Communications Office reviews content for accuracy and currency as they are able and relies on colleagues to help identify any out-of-date content. The college is launching some new sections of its website (e.g., Admissions, DavisConnects, Dean of Students), and while the Evaluation Team noted a few glitches, these pages are attractive and engaging, reflecting the exciting programming and new directions offered by the college. As the Communications Office partners with different departments of the college to develop new pages, they carefully review all content for accuracy.

The team noted a few instances where website information about Colby was out of date. For example, the About Colby page presents endowment figures as of June 2015, and the financial aid summary is as of 2015-16. Likewise, it was difficult to find current enrollment numbers in the Colby-At-A-Glance page. The Institutional Research Office website does not include current information, and the Common Data Set reflects 2015-16 numbers.

Public Disclosure: By visiting the web links provided on the Data First Forms, the Evaluation Team reviewed the information Standard 9 requires to be publicly disclosed, and we confirmed that, in general, the college is accurately providing information. The team noted that a few items were not easy to find (for example, the average student debt), but these were few enough that this simply may be the result of the current website development. From our conversation with staff from the Communications Office, the team is confident that the website will be thoughtfully stewarded.

Affirmation of Compliance

To document the institution's compliance with Federal regulations relating to Title IV, the team reviewed Colby College's Affirmation of Compliance form signed by President Greene. As noted in this report, Colby publicly discloses on its website and in the Catalogue its policy on transfer of credit. Public notification of the evaluation visit and of the opportunity for public comment was made by Colby one month prior to the visit in The

Morning Sentinel, Mainenotices.com, and on the college's website. The Student Handbook describes student complaint policies and procedures. As discussed in Standard 4: The Academic Program, the team's review of the Course Catalogue and course syllabi for a cross-section of Colby's course offerings, coupled with interviews with the Academic Affairs Committee and academic officials, found the assignment of credit by Colby to be substantially consistent with the Commission's standards.

Summary

Following an intense period of reflection and planning that culminated in the development of Eminent Colby, the college continued the momentum of these efforts through the self-study process. Meanwhile, the college established several multi-constituency task forces to study and address some of the most pressing issues and opportunities that were identified, including shared governance, curricular changes, the student experience, and diversity and inclusion.

Under the leadership of a new president and senior staff, the college community exudes a sense of renewed enthusiasm and has embarked on numerous initiatives in a short span of time. Successful fundraising for financial aid, a reworked admissions strategy, and the launch of the DavisConnects global career development program are notable recent accomplishments. Construction is underway on a new athletics complex and a reconnection of Colby to its roots in downtown Waterville through a mixed-use facility that will include student housing and community programming.

Overall, the team was impressed by the caliber of the institution; its people, programs, and resources; the enthusiasm with which it is moving ahead with some ambitious plans; and its early successes toward its objectives. All Colby constituencies are united behind the aspirational goal of elevating Colby to a place of eminence among the most elite liberal arts colleges in the country.

The Evaluation Team presents the following summary of the most significant strengths and concerns discerned during the evaluation process.

Strengths

- Colby is infused with an impressive energy and enthusiasm that is being harnessed—and amplified—by a charismatic new president and a smart, diverse, and engaged senior staff. With dedicated and involved trustees, strong and recently strengthened board governance, and close alignment between the board and the administration, Colby's senior leadership is poised to move the college in bold, new directions. An ambitious and well-orchestrated comprehensive campaign currently being launched will raise the funding to support Colby's new aspirations.

- Already reflecting impressive gains in reputation and rankings, Colby is bolstering these efforts with new admissions strategies and increased funding for financial aid. These admissions strategies have resulted in impressive early signs of success, as evidenced by an increase in applications and an improvement in the college's selectivity, yield rate, and average test scores. Colby is attracting and admitting more diverse and academically qualified students.
- Colby possesses a highly qualified and engaged faculty that is very committed to the college. The faculty have effective functional governance structures in place and work collaboratively with each other and with staff. Students report their professors to be deeply engaged and dedicated teachers and advisers, both inside and outside of the classroom.
- Colby is forward thinking and energetic about creating new programs and using existing ones in new ways to strengthen the liberal arts experience. DavisConnects, for example, is creating cutting-edge programs that integrate global experiences with career development, offering Colby a way to live its liberal arts mission to educate truly global citizens. Similarly, the Main Street project in downtown Waterville offers exciting potential to engage Colby students with the local community. As another example, faculty make wide use of the Colby College Museum of Art and its spectacular collection of American art, actively integrating the museum's resources and programming into their classroom teaching.
- The College has had a long history of conservative spending and prudent stewardship of physical and financial assets that has set an extremely solid financial foundation. Currently, the college is actively taking on more financial risks, closely and effectively managed by a seasoned finance team, by relying more heavily on its endowment. The increased reliance on endowment appears to be manageable within the context of the College's long-term positioning, orientation, and recent successes in fundraising.
- Colby has long been a leader in environmental sustainability, and the recent opening of the solar panel array, adopting of LEED building standards, and enhanced building management systems are representative of Colby's ongoing commitment to and leadership in environmental sustainability.

Concerns

- The rapid pace of change has left some members of the community (both staff and faculty) feeling over-stretched and distanced from planning efforts. Some new initiatives are not yet deeply connected to the academic program and intellectual life of the campus. For example, there is concern among faculty and students that the academic program content for the Waterville project hasn't yet been fully developed. Effective management of change by senior leadership, more

opportunities for constituency input, increased transparency, and ongoing communication will be key in helping Colby achieve its aspirations.

- Colby acknowledges that there are challenges in the areas of student life, residential campus life, and alcohol abuse. There is widespread confidence that the new Dean of the College and student life staff are well-suited to begin to address these student life concerns.
- As Colby explicitly increases the diversity of students, faculty and staff, it needs to transform to an inclusive community and attend to the recommendations of its Task Force on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.
- Learning goals by department are not posted consistently on the public website. More generally, the team did not find a robust commitment among the faculty to assessment of learning outcomes.
- Colby recognizes that its antiquated IT systems and lack of good data governance practices are not adequately supporting the levels of analysis and data-informed decision-making that are desired.