DESCRIPTION

Three Rivers Community College, heir to Mohegan Community College and Thames Valley State Technical College, preserves the best features of each. The College offers a comprehensive array of degree, certificate, and credit-free programs that respond to the evolving needs of the population of Southeastern Connecticut. The 2002-03 catalog outlines the course requirements and program outcomes for 26 Associate in Arts, Associate in Science, or Associate in Applied Science degree programs, currently offered by the College, several of which include additional options. The catalog also outlines 19 certificate programs with their options, and credit-free initiatives offered by the Department of Continuing Education. Academic departments offering credit courses and programs include: Business, Humanities, Mathematics, Natural Science, Nursing and Allied Health, Social Sciences, and Technology.

Three Rivers allows students to achieve credit for demonstrated prior learning through the College’s Assessment of Prior Learning Program as well as national CLEP or DANTES examinations. In addition, the College participates in the Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium and offers distance-learning courses in a variety of areas each semester. Information about all College programs is available in the printed catalog, the College’s website, and material disseminated during the Admissions and Academic Advisement processes.

Planning and Evaluation

All academic programs offered by the College emerge from an academic department and must be approved by the College’s Curriculum Committee, which is chaired by the Academic Dean and includes representation from each academic department, the Department of Continuing Education, the Library, Tutoring and Academic Success Center, and Student Services. The Curriculum Committee ensures that every course or program proposal is consistent with the academic mission of the College, includes program outcomes, and is congruent with College policies, resources, and student needs.

Proposals for new academic programs or substantive changes in existing academic programs must also be approved by the Academic Dean and President and then submitted to the Community-Technical College Board of Trustees, and, in some cases, the Connecticut Department of Higher Education. Requirements established by both external units are available in print or via website. Before a proposal is submitted, it receives preliminary review by the Academic Deans of the other eleven public community colleges in Connecticut.

Program review at Three Rivers takes many forms. Some of it springs from Board of Trustees requirements, some from program accreditation requirements, and some from the institution’s continuing desire to reflect and evaluate. Increasingly, program review incorporates the assessment of learning outcomes and leads to meaningful changes in programs or instruction. Regular review of degree programs is part of the ongoing routine of the College. Each career and technical program has a program coordinator who communicates with key practitioners in the field through advisory committees, professional organizations, or informal contacts. A program may also undergo formal review in accordance with the guidelines established by the Board of Trustees. The A. S. program in Human Services is slated for review of this kind during 2002-03, and all degree programs will follow a similar course (or participate in program accreditation processes) during the next five years.
A prominent example of program review occurred two years ago when the separate programs of Travel and Tourism and Food Service Management began to explore ways that the two programs could complement each other. What resulted was a fundamental reformulation of the two degrees under a common umbrella entitled “Hospitality Management”. The new degree program now includes four options: Tourism Management, Restaurant Management, Hotel Management, and Casino Management. Clearly, the new configuration is more responsive to the needs of the region, and program enrollment is beginning to increase.

Beyond compliance with external mandates, the faculty, staff, and administration of the College value the rigorous process of self-reflection and assessment. During the past three years, a task force completed a comprehensive review of the General Studies and Liberal Arts and Sciences degree (discussed in a subsequent section), the Coordinator of the First Year Experience Program completed research on retention patterns of students taking the course, the College participated in a system study to evaluate the success of distance learning courses, the College Tutoring Center completed a comprehensive review of all facets of its operation, a process that led to its new title as the College Tutoring and Academic Success Center, and the College’s new Academic Advisement Program was reviewed in depth by a team of faculty and Student Services representatives. In each case the review process led to significant program improvements or refinements. During the 2002-03 academic year, the College plans to review its efforts in promoting classroom technology, identify “best practices” in this area, and refine or redirect its future initiatives. Also, during 2002-03, two English faculty will investigate whether the addition of a writing sample will improve placement in developmental reading/writing courses.

In anticipation of collocation, the College recently undertook a comprehensive review of all of its academic programs. Initially, the Interim Academic Dean distributed questionnaires to each program coordinator requesting specific information on every aspect of program operation, including curriculum, advisory committees, program review, student recruitment, adequacy of classrooms, laboratories, or dedicated spaces, level of administrative support, and anticipated future growth and development.

The questionnaires and subsequent investigation and dialogue formed the basis for current and future program planning. The process led to the formation of a student recruitment committee in the Department of Technology, an orchestrated effort by the Hospitality Management program to work closely with neighboring casinos, and inter-coordination between the Departments of Nursing/Allied Health and Continuing Education on the planning of credit free Allied Health programs.

In addition, this process assessed the viability of low enrollment degree and certificate programs that may require suspension or termination. Criteria for review included current and past enrollment, rate of program completion, value to employers and the region, rate of employment and other benefits to individual graduates, present and probable future costs of operating the program, and special value to the College. The decision making process included the Academic Dean, the College Curriculum Committee, the President’s Cabinet, and, ultimately, the President. Besides reviewing existing programs, the process focused on areas of regional need, potential growth, and institutional opportunity. A second questionnaire was circulated throughout the College community soliciting ideas for future program initiatives. Results of the survey were synthesized by the Interim Academic Dean and discussed by the Academic Division Steering Committee (newly formed to streamline issues brought before the Division), the College Curriculum Committee, and the President’s Cabinet. Identified areas for future growth were:

1. Nursing and Allied Health. Clearly, there is a need for additional registered nurses in our region, and that is likely to persist. The state recognizes this need, and additional funding
is a possibility, if not a probability. Similarly, Allied Health in general remains a present and anticipated future priority. We foresee a role in Paramedic training and continuing education, E.M.T. training, Patient Care Tech training, and C.N.A. training. We also expect to respond to emerging allied health needs in areas such as community health, hospital specialties like phlebotomy, respiratory therapy and, perioperative nursing, pharmacy tech training, and perhaps massage therapy. Some of these areas will require credit-free courses, some credit, and still others a blend of the two. Parenthetically but significantly, an increase in Nursing and Allied Health will necessitate an increase in lab Biology and Chemistry. Finally, we plan to continue our work with regional and state dental associations to expand opportunities for Dental Hygiene Education in the state.

2. Hospitality. With the adoption of our new Hospitality Management program and the establishment of a working relationship with Mohegan Sun and Foxwoods casinos, we are beginning to witness a growth in enrollment. That phenomenon should continue, especially in the areas of Casino Management and Restaurant Management (with possible expansion into Culinary Arts). Again we anticipate a combination of credit and credit-free offerings.

3. The related areas of Computer Science, Computer Assisted Design, Web Design, Communication and Graphic Arts, Management Information, Networking Technology, and Information Technology in general. Obviously, we cannot predict with confidence how these rapidly changing fields will evolve, but we can anticipate that they (or variants) will remain areas of enrollment growth and regional need. Once more, we expect a blend of credit and credit-free offerings.

4. Credit-free courses, workshops, and customized training or academic programs for business, industry, and agencies in our region. Continuing Education is a growing part of our College, and we believe its growth will continue and accelerate.

5. English as a Second Language. The demographic composition of our community is changing, and more of our residents need E.S.L. coursework. Our present E.S.L. offerings are expanding, and we expect that to continue. Perhaps we will also see an increase in the number of C.E.U. courses scheduled for E.S.L. teachers.

6. Liberal Arts courses. It's easy to overlook Liberal Arts in the planning process, but we can anticipate steady growth in our General Studies and Liberal Arts and Sciences degrees as well as strengthened emphasis on general education as a required part of all degree programs. Certainly, a new, attractive campus will increase the enrollment of “traditional age” students who wish to complete their general education courses and transfer to a university.

While there exists reasonably confidence about growth in the foregoing areas, there are additional areas that could experience growth as well. Clearly, there are indicators that Photonics and Fiber Optics will experience substantial growth, and the same is true of Early Childhood Education, especially if the state emphasizes the training of “Child Development Associates”. Similarly, we expect many of our career programs in Business, the Technologies, Human Services, and Criminal Justice (including Forensics) to experience modest, incremental growth.

A question mark is Visual and Performing Arts. We believe our enrollment in studio/performance Theater and Art courses could expand but only if we are willing to make a serious investment of full-time faculty support and dedicated space. Barring that level of commitment, we foresee steady, incremental growth, especially if we design space more strategically in our new campus.
An area that warrants investigation is a program for Biotechnology lab assistants. A program of this kind already exists at one of the other community colleges in the state, but there may be a need for one in our region as well. On the other hand, we may be able to satisfy the need through credit-free or credit contract courses as required by Pfizer or other local concerns (a process already underway through the Department of Continuing Education).

Pursuant to this analysis, the College recently revamped and re-titled its certificate program in Publications (now Graphic and Communication Arts) to place greater emphasis on web publications and developed new certificate programs in Web Design, Networking, and Case Management. We are also completing a proposal to offer a new degree/certificate program in Community Health Outreach Work.

The overall program review included recommendations for scaling back or phasing out a number of existing programs, including the Legal and Medical Secretary options of the Business Office Technology Program. These programs are in the phase-out process now, although enrolled students may continue to earn degrees during the period of transition (as specified by Board of Trustees policy on the suspension or termination of programs).

Another program that may be scaled back or curtailed is the A.S. career program in Criminal Justice, a narrowly focused program that has run its course (other Criminal Justice programs would remain). Two programs that merit further review are the A.S. degree programs in Civil Engineering and Manufacturing Engineering Technology. Each has experienced low enrollment in recent years, and each requires dedicated faculty and space. However, plans are underway to improve student recruitment, modify the programs or develop options for new markets, and reduce the costs of maintaining them.

In addition, the Paramedic certificate program is now being reviewed. As noted previously, the College has an important role to play in Paramedic Education, but the existing program is costly to maintain, difficult to staff, and erratic in enrollment. We have placed the program on hold while we study alternatives and work collaboratively with the major health care providers in the region.

In short, the College has made a substantial effort to assess the health and vitality of its existing academic programs and project future needs and initiatives.

Finally, as a measure toward collocation, the College employed the services of a master planning consultant, Dr. Persis Rickes, who circulated questionnaires and surveys of her own on program space utilization and related issues. She also conducted focus group sessions with groups of faculty and staff on five “Learner Centered” thematic areas: --Environments for Teaching and Learning; Holistic Development for Students; Resources for Community Partnerships; Support Services for Learning; and Technology and Learning. Dr. Rickes will submit her conclusions at a later time.

Program Accreditation and Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Several of the College’s efforts to assess learning outcomes derive from the process of program accreditation. A prominent example is outlined in the recent report submitted by the Nursing program to the National League for Nursing (the program is also approved by the Connecticut State Board of Examiners for Nursing).

The Nursing faculty assessed outcomes in the following areas: critical thinking, interpersonal and communication skills, capacity for therapeutic nursing interventions, performance on NCLEX and certifying examinations, employment rates, employer satisfaction with graduates, and graduate satisfaction with the program. In the domains of critical thinking, interpersonal and communication skills, and capacity for therapeutic nursing intervention, the Nursing faculty defined the outcomes, described the methods used to assess each of them, and explained the
reliability, validity, and trustworthiness of each method, the data collected, the interpretation of data, and how the results are used for program decision making.

After careful investigation, the faculty chose to assess critical thinking through administration of the ERI Critical Thinking Process Test at different points in the program and analyzing the results of student performance on the NCLEX-RN exam. For communication and interpersonal abilities, the faculty employed didactic testing, clinical evaluation, process recording exercises, and the use of communication technology. Finally, in the area of therapeutic nursing interventions, competence was measured through the use of clinical performance evaluation forms and graduate and employer responses to surveys.

Many of the College’s Technology degree programs (Civil Engineering Technology, Environmental Engineering Technology, Electrical Engineering Technology, Manufacturing Engineering Technology, Mechanical Engineering Technology, and Nuclear Engineering Technology) are accredited by the Technology Accreditation Commission (TAC) of the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET). The primary means of measuring outcomes for TAC/ABET accreditation is through surveys of graduates and their employers, measuring the satisfaction of each. Accredited programs must also demonstrate that all TAC/ABET specified areas of competence, such as oral presentations, computer applications, and research, are incorporated into the curriculum, and visiting teams review and assess samples of student work in each of these areas.

The Business Department is in the process of seeking program accreditation for all of its degree programs from the Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs. The proposal includes a comprehensive plan for outcome assessment with variations for each program. The Accounting area has already instituted a portfolio presentation into the curriculum, and all of the areas collaborate on an annual Business Skills Seminar. During 2002-03, the department intends to work systematically on other features of the plan.

Finally, the Early Childhood Education program is now seeking accreditation for its Montessori Training Institute from the American Montessori Association (Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education). The proposal includes a detailed listing of every required program competency, the specific courses in which students acquire the competencies, and the means of evaluation. For example, to ensure appropriate evaluation of the first competency, to “demonstrate knowledge of the development and special needs of the child,” the program incorporates observation assignments in the field, discussion of major theories, research papers, case studies, and communication with parents. The reviewers will examine supporting documentation and provide feedback on the efficacy of the measures of assessment.

Currently, the College is building on these accreditation inspired efforts to assess learning outcomes by ensuring that all programs have outcomes (included in the 2002-03 catalog) and integrating assessment into all areas of program review. As noted previously, the Human Services program is scheduled for review during 2002-03, and the College will attempt to define “best practices” in an area of classroom technology. Both initiatives will incorporate assessment of learning outcomes.

In addition, the Academic Division Steering Committee recently established a task force on outcome assessment, and a member of the Humanities faculty and the Director of the Tutoring and Academic Success Center participated in a NEASC sponsored program on that topic.
General Education and the Reformulation of Two Degrees

During the past two years, Three Rivers has conducted a review and evaluation of its Associate Degrees in General Studies and in Liberal Arts and Sciences. During the first year of review, a broad based faculty committee examined the goals and objectives of a liberal arts education and drafted a statement of core values and program outcomes. The statement was subsequently reviewed and discussed by the full faculty at an Academic Division meeting; it was then revised and finally approved by faculty and administration. During the second year of review, the degree programs, with their requirements and plans of study, were examined in detail. The statement of core values and program objectives became the foundation for this examination as faculty reconsidered whether the degree programs as constituted fully enabled students to achieve the desired learning outcomes.

As a result of this second year of review, modifications were made that essentially streamlined and strengthened our degree offerings in Liberal Arts and General Studies. First, it was decided that offering three degrees at the Associate level, A.A. and an A.S. in Liberal Arts and Sciences and an A.S. in General Studies, was redundant and unnecessary. The differences between the degrees were often unclear and difficult to articulate to students. The A. S. in Liberal Arts and Sciences was eliminated, and the remaining two degrees were redefined so that they offered distinct alternatives, each of which meets different student needs. The distribution of courses in the program of study for each degree was modified and strengthened, and the General Studies program specifically, was made more educationally rigorous by limiting some open electives and specifying course requirements in areas such as History, Speech, Fine Arts, Lab Science and courses with an international emphasis.

The General Studies degree still includes more electives while the Liberal Arts and Sciences degree is tightly prescriptive and ensures that students are well prepared for transfer, especially to Eastern Connecticut State University and the University of Connecticut. Both degrees include the “First Year Experience” course for new students, a course that introduces the expectations of college, the organization and philosophical underpinnings of the curriculum, academic planning, and the attributes most closely associated with academic success and persistence. The statement of program outcomes, core values, and course requirements for the General Studies and Liberal Arts and Sciences degrees are included in the 2002-03 catalog.

All other degree programs include a general education component with at least one third of required courses in college English, Social Science, Humanities, Math, Natural Science and a computer literacy requirement. In 1996, the College began an orchestrated effort to reinforce writing across the curriculum and has made substantial headway since then.

Also in progress is a grant-funded initiative to foster mutual content applications between developmental Math faculty and the faculty teaching introductory courses in Business and Technology.

Certificate programs require a maximum of thirty credits, include a minimum proficiency requirement in English, and generally emphasize skills needed for entry-level employment or career advancement in specific occupations. Many certificate programs lead directly into degree programs in the same area.
Career and Technical Degree Programs
A complete list of career and technical degree programs appears in the 2002-03 catalog. All career and technical degree programs culminate in the Associate in Science degree, except for one (General Engineering Technology), which culminates in the Associate in Applied Science degree. The following programs include transfer options to guide students who intend to complete a baccalaureate degree in the field: Accounting, Business Administration, Criminal Justice, and Marketing. Other programs, while not specifically delineating a transfer option, include many transferable courses, and several have articulation agreements with regional colleges and universities. Of particular note is the Connecticut College of Technology program (COT), an innovative program leading to a Bachelor of Science Degree in engineering or technology. The program consists of two distinct pathways, one in engineering and one in technology. After completing the Technology Pathway Program at Three Rivers, students may enter directly into technical fields at Central Connecticut State University or Charter Oak State College (Connecticut’s External Degree Program). The Engineering Pathway leads directly into the School of Engineering at the University of Connecticut. The pathway courses will transfer to engineering and technology programs at many other public and private universities as well. Specific COT course requirements are described in the COT Program of Study in the catalog.

All of the career and technical degree programs have a designated faculty program coordinator who maintains communication with practitioners in the field through advisory committees, professional associations, regional organizations, or informal contacts. This ongoing process of communication augments the program review/accreditation processes explained previously and ensures continuous updating and refinement. The College makes annual investments in hardware, software, other equipment, and library resources to keep career and technical degree programs as current as possible. As technology accelerates in all areas, however, it is becoming increasingly difficult to upgrade across the board. The prevailing strategy is to concentrate on a couple of career and technical areas a year and attempt to deal as comprehensively as possible with their resource needs. The College Educational Technology Committee regularly reviews and prioritizes computer related requests from career, technical, and other programs.

Developmental Education and English as a Second Language
The College offers a series of required developmental and transitional courses for students who are academically under-prepared for college level coursework. To this end, faculty who teach developmental courses work collaboratively on outcomes with faculty who teach college level English, Math, and other courses. A review of developmental reading and writing courses two years ago led to a new four credit developmental course entitled, “Reading, Discussing, and Writing”. Outcomes for this course are detailed, explicit, and reflective of the expectations of faculty in college level courses. At the same time, the College instituted a new, voluntary one-credit course entitled “Sentence and Paragraph Workshop”. This course, although developmental, may be taken by students at any stage of their academic journeys. It emphasizes basic techniques of proofreading, computer assisted editing and proofreading, and detecting difficulties that interfere with clear, well-formed sentences and paragraphs.

Developmental Math includes separate courses in Basic Math Skills and Basic Algebra. During 2002-03, the Math faculty plan to pilot a four credit version of each of these courses that incorporates computer assisted instruction, supervised study, and in-class tutoring. Like most other colleges and universities, Three Rivers struggles with high attrition in developmental math courses (during Spring, 2001, 52% of students in developmental math courses did not successfully complete them) and strives for continuous improvement in this area of the
curriculum. As noted previously, a pair of Math faculty will also work during 2002-03 with colleagues in Business and Technology on integrating applications from those areas into developmental math courses (and vice-versa).

A portion of students enrolled in developmental courses are permitted to take the First Year Experience course, since that course, although college level, reinforces many of the key attributes of student success that are typically lacking in developmental students, including note-taking and time management. Data so far indicate that students taking developmental courses do as well in the F.Y.E. course as their non-developmental counterparts. Additionally, students who take developmental courses and the FYE course display a higher rate of continued enrollment than students who take developmental courses without FYE (During Spring, 2001, 80% of the developmental FYE students persisted to the second semester).

As a result of expanding enrollment and greater levels of student need, the English as a Second Language program is undergoing substantial modification. Originally, the program provided two levels of coursework with four hours of class time per week for each level. Now, each level requires six hours per week, and a new three credit E.S.O.L. course, “Writing Skills: The Sentence”, was introduced as a supplement during Summer, 2002. The College will continue its review of English as a Second Language during 2002-03.

**Student Achievement**

Three Rivers encourages and supports high student achievement in several ways. The College chapter of Phi Theta Kappa honorary is especially active and the recipient of numerous regional and national awards. Also active are student organizations in a variety of disciplines: Architecture, Nuclear Engineering Technology, Business, Early Childhood Education, Electrical Engineering Technology, Manufacturing Engineering Technology, Photonics Engineering Technology, Spanish, Nursing, Science Fiction, Performing Arts, Writing, and Field Geology. The College student newspaper, The Current, will introduce a web component during 2002-03, and the Performing/Fine Arts areas will continue to sponsor student art exhibits, plays, and other performances.

In addition, the College recognizes students through semester Dean’s Lists and the graduation honors of Cum Laude, Magna Cum Laude, and Summa Cum Laude. Students graduating with a 4.0 average receive the Board of Trustees Medallion. Each year, the College grants over thirty scholarships and academic awards and recognizes student recipients at a ceremony shortly before commencement. Last year, a faculty member undertook the task of expanding our relationships with excellent high school students (and their teachers and counselors) and exploring transfer and scholarship opportunities for Three Rivers students who wish to transfer to highly selective colleges and universities. That effort will continue during 2002-03.

Finally, the College encourages service learning and provides opportunities for volunteer service. Areas of the curriculum that combine academic work with service to the community include: Marketing, Criminal Justice, Early Childhood Education, English, Human Services, Nursing, and Sociology. Beyond these curriculum based initiatives, students have performed volunteer community service for numerous organizations, including the regional Women’s Center, Special Olympics, Habitat for Humanity, America Reads, the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, and local soup kitchens.
Continuing Education

The Three Rivers Continuing Education Department offers a wide variety of credit and noncredit courses and programs to accommodate the academic, business, and cultural needs of the community. Courses may be offered at the Norwich campuses, work sites, or other off-campus locations. Three Rivers is an official provider of Continuing Education Units (CEU’s) required by educators to maintain teaching certification. CEU courses are offered on a regular basis, and the department is prepared to design courses for school systems that have specific requests. Three Rivers is also a member of the system-wide Business and Industry Services Network (BISN) that responds to the changing needs of local enterprises. BISN designs flexible and short-term programs to respond to changing technologies and workplace retraining needs. Other components of Continuing Education are the Software Training Center, an AutoDesk Training Center, real estate programs, allied health programs, and continuing education for nursing and allied health. Training is provided in diverse areas such as AutoCAD, fiber optics, hazardous waste operations, methods of teaching English as a second language, and bartending/alcohol serving. The enrichment courses vary from aerobics and yoga to boating and painting. During the fall, 2001 semester, the department served 2,110 students, approximately a 400% increase since fall, '98.

External collaboration is provided by an Advisory Council, which is composed of members of the local community and other departments of the college. Organizations currently represented include: The Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, Connecticut Department of Labor, Connecticut Maritime Coalition, Eastern Area Health Education Center, Electric Boat, Groton Utilities, Lawrence & Memorial Hospital, Mohegan Tribe, Navy College (U.S. Naval Submarine Base, Groton, CT), Norwich Bulletin, Pfizer, Inc., Southeastern Connecticut Enterprise Region, Southeastern Connecticut Regional Workforce Investment Board, St. Christopher’s Health Center, Thames Valley Council for Community Action, William W. Backus Hospital, and York Correctional Facility. Their assistance with curriculum development is essential to keep training relevant to the current employment and training needs of Southeastern Connecticut.

Research, Scholarship, and Faculty Professional Development

The College provides numerous opportunities for classroom-based research, participation in professional development activities, projects, and programs, and participation in discipline based conferences and professional organizations. These opportunities spring from a variety of sources: professional development funds set aside for individual faculty to attend conferences, seminars, or short courses, funds set aside to allow annual sabbatical opportunities for a limited number of faculty, retraining funds to subsidize education in another discipline, campus based professional development programs or projects sponsored by the College Center for Teaching Committee, system-wide professional development initiatives sponsored by the System Center for Teaching Committee, and initiatives sponsored by academic departments, the College administration, or faculty task forces or committees. Ongoing professional development is a norm and expectation for full-time faculty and a desired goal for part-time faculty. It is part of the fabric of the institution and solidly woven into its faculty culture.

Even a partial list of annual professional development activities would take pages and still not account for the hundreds of informal faculty-to-faculty exchanges on teaching and learning that take place each semester. A recent emphasis for professional development has been classroom technology, but that will be discussed in a later section.
Finally, the College has made a concerted effort to expand opportunities for professional
dialogue between part-time faculty and full-time faculty and among part-time faculty themselves.
Now in place is a buddy system which pairs new and veteran part-time faculty, an updated
Faculty Handbook which gives particular attention to part-time faculty, a part-time faculty office,
improved voice-mail and e-mail access, and departmental and divisional initiatives to encourage
part-time faculty to participate in professional development activities, department and divisional
meetings, and other College gatherings.

**Instructional Delivery**

Instructional delivery takes multiple forms but is always guided by adherence to academic
standards and adaptation to student needs. The faculty strives continuously to improve
classroom teaching, question past practices, and find a better way. Syllabi almost never remain
the same from semester to semester as faculty incorporate recent material from their disciplines
and experiment with collaborative or service learning, web based learning, classroom
technology, conferencing, peer review, e-learning, learning communities, in-class tutoring,
portfolios, simulations, writing and math across the curriculum, or new ways to capitalize on
Cultural diversity within the classroom. Classroom (and out-of-classroom) innovation is
encouraged at every turn.

A few recent examples illustrate the point. The Social Science Department held an open
classroom week during which faculty freely observed each other’s classes and engaged in
follow-up discussions of methods and approaches to the discipline. The English faculty brought
in a consultant and negotiated a set of parameters to guide the use of portfolios in Composition
classes. The College instituted an in-class tutoring program built around a course for tutors.
Several clusters of faculty planned learning community projects that will bring their students
together or integrate their content during the coming year. The nursing faculty participated in a
simulated accreditation visit to prepare for N.L.N. accreditation. A faculty committee coalesced
around service learning and spawned a number of projects. Another group is now forming to
bring in speakers on “communities within our community”. And so it goes. Each year produces
its own reflection and ferment. At Three Rivers, nothing is cast in stone, and innovation is the
order of the day.

Perhaps the most dramatic example of recent innovation is in the area of educational technology.
Two years ago, a group of faculty, staff, and members of the Information Technology Division
gathered informally to discuss their excitement about technological advances in teaching and
how Three Rivers should employ them. What emerged was a College Educational Technology
Committee with representation across departments, disciplines, and divisions within the College.
The Committee has identified priorities for faculty training and the acquisition, installation, and
utilization of multimedia tools to enhance learning.

Since that time, smart boards have been installed in classrooms at both campuses, web page
development guidelines have been established, and each department has a web maintainer, a
College-wide professional day was held on educational technology, a student survey on the use
of smart board technology was distributed and the results analyzed, policies for the distribution
of laptops in addition to PCs in faculty offices were ironed out, new scanners, printers, digital
cameras, laptops, video digitizing equipment, and software were purchased, and numerous
training sessions were held for faculty on smart board technology, PowerPoint presentations,
web applications for faculty, creative uses of the Internet, and other related topics.
The vision and excitement remains robust. A recent survey concerning pedagogical technology needs indicates that ninety (90%) of faculty respondents utilize e-mail to communicate with advisees and students. Fifty percent (50%) are or have used the Smart Board equipment since its installation a year ago. Of those who have not yet used the Smart Board tools, eighty-one (81%) would like to learn how to utilize them. Only five percent (5%) of respondents have not taken advantage of training opportunities during the past two years. The majority of faculty desire continued or additional training, especially in the realm of course website development. Seventy-three percent (73%) of instructors are using Internet resources to improve pedagogy. The enthusiasm appears contagious.

Looking forward, the Educational Technology Committee will reflect upon and evaluate best practices in the use of technology-assisted learning. Insights concerning hardware and software deployment will be shared among colleagues. Goals for the future include: 1) investigating instructional design matters, such as developing appropriate media for web assisted courses based on sound learning outcomes, 2) developing instructional strategies, and 3) pedagogical issues in on-line learning and collaborative work groups. Non-instructional issues such as institutional direction, timelines, support for course development, faculty recognition, marketing and student support have been identified as longer-term goals.

Of equal importance has been the College’s foray into e-learning and distance learning. However, we have discussed this topic in a separate review of electronically offered degree programs and will not repeat the same information here. In the Appraisal/Projections section of this report, we will return to the subject of distance learning and the questions it poses for our future.

Finally, we should note that the College now requires standardized student ratings of instructors. Results are shared with faculty who use the feedback to improve their teaching. The ratings are reviewed by department heads, and in the case of full-time faculty, summaries are retained in their professional files.

**Facilities and Off-campus Sites**

In addition to the main Norwich campuses, off-campus programs and courses for credit are offered by the Academic Division at the Naval Submarine Base in Groton, Connecticut, Waterford High School, and Ella Grasso Technical High School in Groton. Also, credit and non-credit courses are offered at the York, Radgowski, and Gates Correctional Facilities under the auspices of the Academic Division, the Tech Prep program, and Continuing Education. The Academic Dean and academic departments develop off-site courses at the appropriate facilities, primarily in response to a community request or identified need. These offerings are staffed by full and part-time faculty and contracted personnel.

In 1976, responding to a request from the United States Naval Submarine Base, the College began providing programs, courses, and services to military personnel, their dependents, and Department of Defense workers. On-site courses are offered at the U.S. Naval Submarine Base in Groton, Connecticut. The College also serves Coast Guard personnel, National Guard, Veteran’s Affairs, Connecticut tuition waiver individuals, and civilians. Three Rivers is sensitive to this diverse segment of its student body. Historically, the college operated a comprehensive center at the Subase and offered sufficient courses for degrees in a number of areas. However, security restrictions and recent home-security events have precluded course...
offerings from continuing in this manner. The college is currently developing new methods for instruction of Subase personnel. Also in transition is the use of Waterford High School as an off-campus site. In response to budget cuts, the College will discontinue courses at this site beginning spring, 2003.

College facilities are available for community use, presentations and a variety of activities throughout each year. An established fee is collected to cover overhead and appropriate support for the events as needed. Theatrical performances, professional seminars and training, state agency events, and various public meetings and forums are presented each year.

Admissions/Advising
Most of the faculty participates in student advising. The system-wide Banner student management information system is available to all faculty for advising support and information, including student academic history, semester schedules, and registration. A recent initiative is the development of a “best practices”-based Academic Advising Process that strives to create a learner-based environment with shared responsibility and participation between students and faculty and addresses student needs, motivation, and educational objectives. Faculty is trained prior to being assigned advisees. The process was evaluated during 2001-02 and will be refined accordingly.

Three Rivers maintains an open admissions policy and extends the opportunity for higher education to individuals who demonstrate the motivation and maturity needed to benefit from community college instruction. The College provides educational opportunities to people regardless of age, religion, racial or ethnic background or disabilities. Admission to the college does not necessarily mean immediate eligibility for all courses and program. Presently, admission to the A.S. degree program in Nursing is governed by special criteria. Admission criteria and policies are available in published public documents, including the catalog and semester schedule. Information is also available on the College’s website and in printed form at the Admissions Office. Policies for transfer, readmission, and international students are also available at these locations.

The College accepts all graduates of accredited high schools, individuals who hold a GED, mature adults (21 or older) who demonstrate the ability to benefit at the college level, high school students accepted for early admission, or those participating in the Tech-Prep Program or the High School Partnership Program.

The College regularly presents various outreach activities and initiatives that seek enrollments from diverse community populations. Particular efforts address minority and ESOL applicants, and focused activities target prospective female technology students as well. The College participates in regional college fairs, and markets and publicizes the college’s opportunities in local and regional media, including newspapers and radio.

Basic Skills and Academic Support
After admissions, all new first-time students are required to complete an assessment of basic skills in mathematics, reading and writing. This un-timed computerized placement test is designed to help students gain information about their readiness for college-level course work. A full-time Coordinator oversees placement testing and reports to the Director of Counseling. With the assistance of an advisor, students use this information to make decisions about course selections and long-term educational planning. Admitted students with identified special needs
are accommodated upon request with the assistance of counselors, faculty, a Learning Disabilities specialist, and the Tutoring and Academic Success Centers (TASC). Responses can include instructional accommodations and the use of specialized adaptive technologies.

The College offers developmental courses in reading, writing, and mathematics. These courses are designed to help students whose placement scores indicate they need to improve academic skills before taking required courses in programs of study. Developmental courses provide individual support and concentrate on specific skills. Developmental courses are taught by full and part-time faculty and are reviewed regularly by the respective departments. New, first time college students admitted to the Liberal Arts and Sciences and General Studies programs are required to take the First Year Experience course (IDS K105) in the first or second semester, or before attaining 12 credits. This course is designed to help new students meet the expectations of college life.

The TASC (Tutoring and Academic Success Centers) provide individual academic assistance for students. Services include one-to-one peer tutoring in most disciplines, make-up testing, academic success workshops, and the availability of specialized course related software and adaptive technologies for students with special needs. In addition, the College created a Writing Center at the beginning of fall, 2002.

**Transfer and APL Credits**

The acceptance of transfer credits is described in specific Board policies. Credit by transfer is evaluated during the semester the student is registered as a degree-seeking student (or readmitted). Degree credit is granted for credit courses completed at all institutions within the Connecticut state systems of higher education and at all other regionally accredited collegiate institutions. Credit may also be granted for coursework from non-collegiate organizations and by external and internal examinations (CLEP, DANTES, or challenge exams) in accordance with Board and Department of Higher Education policies.

Three Rivers must grant a minimum of 25% of degree credits. No more than 30 credit hours (50% of a degree awarded by CLEP, DANTES, challenge exams, Military Service Schools, or APL (Assessment of Prior Learning), may count toward the associate degree. Specific articulation agreements exist with Eastern Connecticut State University (ECSU), Central Connecticut State University (CCSU), University of Bridgeport, University of Hartford, University of Connecticut, Southern Illinois University, Charter Oak College, and the University of New Haven. Discussions are being held with Fairfield University and Johnson and Wales University regarding possible agreements.

The evaluation of student learning and achievement is consistent with stated program objectives that are developed and monitored by each program and are compatible with system standards, requirements, and descriptions. No credit is granted for developmental or pre-college coursework. A system-wide initiative to develop common course numbers will expedite transfer in general.

An Assessment of Prior Learning Program that utilizes portfolio development and assessment oversee credit for prior learning. An Assessment Committee reviews and evaluates the portfolio and determines the number of credits granted. No credit is awarded outside the subject areas encompassed by the approved curriculum of the College. Credits gained through this process are applicable towards an associate degree and may not number more than 50% of the degree.
Standards of Progress and Graduation Requirements

Academic Standards of Progress are clearly identified in the College catalog. Students are expected to maintain satisfactory academic progress during each semester enrolled once they have attempted 12 or more credits. Students failing to maintain the Standards of Progress are subject to the College’s Academic Probation and Suspension Policy. Additional policies also formally address the reinstatement of suspended students, as well as the option of an Academic Renewal available to eligible students who have been away from the college following a poor academic start.

Policies regarding graduation are listed in the college catalog. Application for graduation and payment of required fees follows a printed schedule. The student, the advisor, and the Registrar’s Office confirm completion of required program course work.

APPRAISAL AND PROJECTION

The “Description” portion of this standard highlighted major areas of progress and illustrated the College’s vibrancy as an academic institution. Here we want to focus our appraisal and projections on the central issues that require the College’s deepest reflection or its most sustained commitment to change. In many areas, the College is solidly on track and need only to maintain momentum. Those areas should be apparent from the “Description” as well.

A cloud that hangs over us is budget uncertainty. In response to severe cutbacks in state funding, we are entering the 2002-03 year with a number of unfilled full-time faculty positions. What the future holds beyond this year is difficult to gauge. We are concerned but unable to calculate the long-term impact on the academic strength of the institution.

Assuming that resources permit, the following areas will require our deepest reflection or our most sustained commitment to change:

1. **General Education**  
   As noted previously, we took a significant step by defining the core values and outcomes of our General Studies and Liberal Arts and Sciences degrees and revising the degrees themselves. On the horizon, however, is a system-wide review of general education, partly driven by the need for tighter articulation with the state university system and the University of Connecticut. It is too early to forecast the shape of the statewide initiative, nor whether it will lead to an explicit general education core curriculum. We will take part in the deliberations and reassess our programs accordingly.  
   An area of particular concern is the general education component of our career and technical degree programs. We plan to look at the core values and outcomes for General Studies and Liberal Arts and Sciences and ask whether they also embody general education in career and technical programs. Either way we answer that question, curricular reform may be the result.

   The impact of the system-wide initiative on career and technical degree programs is unclear. However, a major concern of faculty in those programs is that the emerging general education requirements may be incongruent with or ancillary to the requirements imposed by accreditation agencies and even N.E.A.S.C. itself. If the net effect is an increase in the number of credits devoted to general education, programs may be forced to sacrifice essential career or technical courses or add credits to programs that are packed to the limit already.
Thus, we project that general education will remain a central issue for faculty deliberation and that we will focus our attention on career and technical programs, the core values and outcomes previously established for the General Studies and Liberal Arts and Sciences degrees, and the system-wide initiative to define general education requirements.

2. **Distance Learning** The supplemental report on on-line degree programs outlines our evolution in distance learning. From a start of one or two courses per semester, we have slowly but steadily climbed to approximately a dozen courses per semester. The array of courses is guided by the desire for balance among disciplines as well as the interest and expertise of individual faculty.

Through a system-wide grant and our own probing, we are beginning to assess student (and faculty) success and satisfaction with distance learning courses. We know that some students thrive, while others do not, and that some students seem to know “what they are getting into”, while others do not.

No doubt, this assessment will continue and intensify, but it will only be the prelude to a broader analysis. Our next major task is to define the overall place of distance learning in our curriculum. Once more, system-wide initiatives may play a prominent role, since consideration is being given to a more centralized or coordinated approach to the offering of courses and the advisement of students.

If we remain essentially autonomous, we must answer a series of questions: Do we envisage distance learning as a means of attracting a new population of students, largely beyond our geographic area, or do we view distance learning primarily as an option for students enrolled in our College already? Is it fiscally practical for us to expand the number of distance learning courses in our schedule if enrollment must be less than on-site courses? What is a reasonable enrollment expectation for on-line courses, given the demands on faculty? Should we strive for the expansion of on-line programs or limit ourselves to an array of courses? Are there an optimum percentage of courses that should be offered via distance learning?

We are gradually awakening to the realization that on-line education and traditional, on-site education are not polar opposites but part of a contemporary continuum. Faculty are beginning to experiment with creative syntheses, such as offering on-site and on-line courses and allowing students to travel between them and combining features of on-site and on-line education in the same course rather than sticking slavishly to the “pure” form of either one. Perhaps our future lies in breaking through strict categorical definitions and becoming more creative.

Therefore, we project that distance/on-line education will remain a topic for deliberation and that we will define its overall place in our curriculum.

3. **Assessment of Learning Outcomes** The “Description” outlines several accreditation related forays into outcome assessment and notes that two projects are slated for 2002-03, a review of the Human Services program and an assessment of some aspect of classroom technology. Many individual or departmental efforts, such as the employment of portfolio assessment in Composition courses, will remain on track as well.
While these efforts are encouraging, they do not constitute a plan for assessment of learning outcomes. A recently formed faculty task force will consider alternatives and recommend a blueprint for us to follow. We know that we must review our degree programs and assess their learning outcomes on a periodic basis. We also know that we must assess key elements of instructional delivery, such as classroom technology, to ensure that we are employing “best practices” and that students are learning what we believe they are. Finally, we know that learning outcomes in all areas should be reviewed on a regular basis and modified as necessary.

The College recently hired an Institutional Research Coordinator (shared with Quinebaug Valley Community College), who will be a valuable asset. Our projection, therefore, is that we will develop a plan for assessment of learning outcomes and establish a routine/timetable to ensure that the outcomes of our academic programs and critical elements of instructional delivery, are reviewed and assessed on a periodic basis.

4. Integration of Continuing Education
   Continuing education is a strong, vibrant, and increasingly important arm of the academic program of the College. Its growth in recent years has been phenomenal, and its impact extends to all parts of the community. Our guiding principle has been that we are “one college” and that Continuing Education is a central part of it. We do not regard Continuing Education as a separate entity, somehow detached from the rest of the College, with its own protocols and reasons for being.

   This principle, while sound, is not always easy to translate into practice. The Department of Continuing Education must respond rapidly to emerging community needs and the requests of regional employers. It must try to broker or negotiate non-traditional relationships between academic departments and local businesses or agencies. At times, it must arrange for non-standard methods of registration, advisement, and collection of revenues. It is, in many instances, the proverbial square peg trying to fit into a round hole. The result is an ongoing tension that requires communication, problem-solving, and jurisdictional negotiation.

   We have achieved considerable progress in making the “one college” concept a reality, but much remains to be done. The Director of Continuing Education will continue to serve as a member of the College Curriculum Committee and President’s Cabinet and use those two forums to raise issues, minimize friction points, and heighten collaboration. Of particular concern at this point are: enhancing collaboration between Continuing Education and the Department of Nursing and Allied Health on the oversight and coordination of allied health courses and programs administered by Continuing Education; refining internal procedures for evaluating apprenticeship and other forms of non-collegiate instruction (in accordance with Board of Trustees policy); increasing knowledge of faculty and academic advisors about credit-free courses and programs; and negotiating the mutual responsibilities of Continuing Education and support areas that have not been allocated additional resources to accommodate the demands of the “one college” model.

   Other measures to advance the cause of Continuing Education are not within institutional control, especially the lack of financial aid resources available to students in credit-free programs. Hopefully, Federal and State initiatives will begin to address this need.
In summary, we project that the “one college” principle will continue to guide us and that we will strive to integrate Continuing Education with all areas of College operations.

5. **Response to demographic shifts in our community and student body**  The population of Southeastern Connecticut is changing rapidly as people from every part of the world capitalize on the employment opportunities afforded by the two major casinos in the region. Our enrollment in English as a Second Language courses has grown and necessitated changes in the number of sections, credits, and contact hours of instruction. We have attempted to staff E.S.O.L. courses with adjunct faculty but find it increasingly difficult to do so. We cannot project that we will add a full-time faculty member with primary responsibility in this area, since our budget uncertainty precludes such a prediction. However, we can say that we recognize the need and will address it.

Beyond E.S.O.L., we are beginning to reflect on what it means to be a college in an increasingly pluralistic, multi-cultural, and multi-lingual community. Already in progress is the creation of an intercultural student organization that will provide support and conversational opportunities for English as a second language and international students and a series of short presentations or programs on “different communities within our community”. In the discussion stage are proposals to create new courses, such as “International Business” and “Cross-Cultural Communication”.

We cannot project specifically where all of this will lead, but the demographic changes in Southeastern Connecticut present us with exciting challenges and opportunities. No doubt, we will grapple with them during the years ahead.

6. **Helping our students become more successful in foundation academic areas, especially writing and mathematics**  The Fall 2002 semester marks the beginning of a new College Writing Center, and we are concentrating on improving the performance of students in Math courses. As noted previously, two Math faculty will pilot experimental sections of developmental math courses during spring, 2002, and work with faculty in Business and Technical areas on mutual integration and reinforcement of course content and applications.

A longer-term issue is how the College provides out-of-class tutorial, instructional, and computer support to Math students. Presently, this support is provided by the Tutoring and Academic Success Center, but the Math faculty believes that a dedicated Math Lab (along with a dedicated Math classroom with computers) is a desired goal. Perhaps the expansion/collocation of the College will open up possibilities that do not appear to be open now.

In any event, we project that helping our students in foundation academic areas, with particular attention to Math, will remain an important academic priority of the institution.

7. **Academic Advising**  As noted previously, we have made significant strides in creating a “continuous advisement process,” an excellent advisement manual for faculty, and improved Banner and web support for advisors. The faculty is solidly behind the process and participates in all aspects of it. A faculty leader of advisement receives release time and works cross-divisionally with members of the Student Services Division.

A cross-divisional team evaluated the advisement process during 2001-02 and made recommendations for the future. The team recommended that the Academic Division
assign oversight of its part of academic advisement to an existing academic administrator or create a new position with that responsibility. Once more, budget limits make predictions hazardous, but we can project that the refinement of academic advisement will remain a priority, and that we will attempt to enhance administrative support and oversight of the process.

8. **Planning for College Collocation** As we anticipate our eventual expansion and physical consolidation, we are making important decisions about the viability of our existing academic programs and areas of potential growth and new program development. We are planning cautiously and factoring in the possibility of shrinking resources.

Once programmatic decisions are made, the scene will shift to issues such as the design, technology, and blend of general-purpose classrooms, the laboratories in our future, and the configuration of faculty offices and conference areas. It will soon become apparent that, even with expanded space, we cannot fulfill all of our desires. We will need to be thoughtful, creative, flexible, and committed to teaching and learning. Certainly, we can project that our attention as an academic community will remain focused on collocation until that phenomenon occurs.

In closing, we want to reiterate that we have chosen to refrain from effusive self-congratulations and listing “everything we’ve done” since the last NEASC visit. However, we are proud of our accomplishments and believe that we are a healthy, vibrant academic community with a strong tradition of programmatic and instructional excellence. We are momentarily daunted by the budget cuts we’ve been forced to endure but still looking ahead to a future of progress.