

# SELF-STUDY REPORT

For the Middle States Commission on Higher Education

February 10, 2017





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## ALBRIGHT COLLEGE SELF-STUDY LEADERSHIP

### **Steering Committee**

Jennifer Koosed, Ph.D., Professor of Religious Studies, *Co-chair*  
Joseph M. Thomas, Ph.D., Associate Provost and Dean for Academic Affairs, *Co-chair*  
Brian Buerke, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Physics  
Gina Crance, Ed.D., Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students  
Tom Durso, Associate Vice President for College Relations and Marketing  
Greg Eichhorn, Vice President for Enrollment Management and Dean of Admission, to June 2016  
Greg Fulmer, Vice President for Administrative and Financial Services  
Jack LaFayette, Director of Institutional Research  
Julia Matthews, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Theatre  
Mary McGee, Th.D., Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs  
Steve Mech, Ph.D., Professor of Biology  
Rashmi Radhakrishnan, Chief Information Officer  
Ian Rhile, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Chemistry  
Guillaume de Syon, Ph.D., Professor of History  
Lisa Wilder, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Economics and Business

### **Working Group Co-Chairs**

*Working Group One (Standards 1, 2, and 3):*

Greg Fulmer, Vice President for Finance and Administration  
Lisa Wilder, Associate Professor of Economics and Business

*Working Group Two (Standards 4, 5, and 6):*

Ian Rhile, Associate Professor of Chemistry  
Joseph M. Thomas, Associate Provost and Dean for Academic Affairs

*Working Group Three (Standards 7 and 14):*

Brian Buerke, Associate Professor of Physics  
Sam Wesner, Assistant Dean of Students and Director of the Gable Health Center

*Working Group Four (Standards 8 and 9):*

Greg Eichhorn, Vice President for Enrollment Management and Dean of Admission [to June 2016]

Julia Matthews, Associate Professor of Theatre

*Working Group Five (Standard 10):*

Guillaume de Syon, Professor of History

Kristen Woodward, Professor of Art

*Working Group Six (Standards 11, 12, and 13):*

Chuck Brown, Associate Professor of Sociology

Steve Mech, Professor of Biology

*Working Group Seven (Federal Compliance):*

Gina Crance, Vice President of Student Affairs and Dean of Students

## INSTITUTIONAL ACRONYMS USED IN THE SELF-STUDY

AAPR – Administrative Area Program Review

ACRT – Advisory Committee on Rank and Tenure

ADP – Accelerated Degree Programs

AICUP – Association of Independent Colleges & Universities of Pennsylvania

ALC – Academic Learning Center

APR – Academic Program Review

CDC – Curriculum Development Committee

ELCDC – Experiential Learning and Career Development Center

EOY – end of year

EPC – Educational Policy Council

FEC – Faculty Executive Committee

FYS – First-Year Seminar

GEC – General Education Committee

PC – Professional Council

SPIRA – Strategic Planning, Institutional Research, and Assessment (intranet website)

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Albright College conducted a comprehensive self-study in preparation for its accreditation review by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

The re-accreditation process began in the spring of 2015 with the appointment of co-chairs, one from the administration and one from the faculty. The co-chairs assembled a steering committee that, in turn, helped constitute six working groups. Over 70 people representing every facet of the campus community—faculty, students, administration, support staff, trustees—were directly involved in the work of data collection, analysis, and report. Many more participated in the process through their help in providing or gathering data, participating in open forums and other meetings, and reviewing both the recommendations and the full Self-Study draft. The research for and writing of the Self-Study document has enabled the whole College to come together and identify strengths as well as areas for further improvement.

Albright College is well positioned to meet the challenges of educating people into the twenty-first century. Among our many strengths are:

1. A commitment to making college affordable for everyone (Chapter Two, Standard 3 and Chapter Five, Standard 8)
2. A vibrant, active, and diverse student body (Chapter Three, Standard 6 and Chapter Five, Standard 8)
3. A strong, highly interdisciplinary curriculum (Chapter Seven, Standards 11 and 12)
4. Increasing opportunities for experiential learning both on and off campus (Chapter Seven, Standard 13)
5. Robust support for student research, including collaborate projects with faculty and support for presentation and publication (Chapter Seven, Standard 13)
6. The leading Accelerated Degree Programs in the area (Chapter Seven, Standards 11 and 12)
7. A dedicated faculty distinguished by its teaching and scholarship (Chapter Six, Standard 10)
8. Responsive planning processes across the College's administrative and academic departments (Chapter Two, Standard 2)
9. Effective support services routinely lauded by students (Chapter Five, Standard 9 and Chapter Four, Standard 7)

The self-study process has also enabled the College to identify changes we could make to further strengthen our policies, procedures, and programs. Fifteen concrete and achievable recommendations along with twenty suggestions have emerged, the implementation of which has already begun and will greatly benefit our community. The recommendations and suggestions are as follows:

Recommendations, by Standard:

1. Complete implementation of rebranding effort, including redesign of the College website and improved processes for editing and maintaining web pages (Standard 1)
2. Develop a sustainable operating model and financial plan that reduces tuition-dependence by increasing revenue, reducing expense, and assuring a modest, recurring operating margin within the budget. (Standard 2)
3. Working with the new President of the College, create a new strategic plan (Standard 2)
4. Now that all classes have entered under the new “meet need” financial aid strategy, further assess the value and viability of this practice and share findings with campus stakeholders (Standard 3)
5. Make further investments in residence hall renovations and improvements (Standard 3)
6. Pursue additional funding for library renovation, to include a new learning commons as a key site for improved teaching and learning (Standard 3)
7. Strengthen periodic review of administrative areas, ensuring timely completion and useful results (Standard 5)
8. Complete an effective intellectual property policy that serves the entire campus (Standard 6)
9. Design and implement a plan to increase faculty and staff diversity (Standard 6)
10. Educate the College community about various means available to communicate complaints and grievances, especially the new student grievance forms, and ensure appropriate tracking and response (Standard 9)
11. Revise the non-tenure track and tenure track faculty evaluation systems to clarify expectations with regard to workload, scholarship, and service (Standard 10)
12. Improve definitions of faculty workload and the distribution of faculty committee work, relying in part on previous discussions funded by the Sloan Foundation (Standard 10)
13. Review, improve, and communicate processes for hiring, evaluating, supporting, and recognizing adjunct faculty (Standard 10)
14. Complete execution of the current general education assessment plan and ensure a sustainable long-term assessment process that is built upon broad faculty participation (Standard 12)

15. Strengthen alignment of course and program-level student learning outcomes through improved reporting and communication mechanisms to make student learning outcomes and evidence more accessible at the course, program and institutional levels (Standard 14)
16. Formally integrate assessment of learning outcomes of Accelerated Degree Program majors and general education into annual college-wide assessment and planning (Standard 14)

Suggestions:

1. Define and implement a protocol for regular budget updates to the entire campus community to continue to improve communication and gain input
2. Enhance training of budget managers, especially new budget managers
3. Provide centralized web access to committee minutes, maintain accurate committee lists, and make these readily available
4. Undertake campus conversations on the meaning and exercise of transparency and shared governance at Albright
5. Develop a means, such as “360” reviews, for broader community input into performance assessment, especially that of senior administrators
6. Improve storage, access, and maintenance of official policies, both faculty and administrative
7. Develop administrative goals where appropriate that are connected to student learning outcomes, especially in student support areas, and provide related professional development for staff as needed
8. Review Assessment Committee role and determine opportunities to collaborate with other faculty committees and academic processes to further a sustainable, broadly based assessment culture
9. Increase faculty development in assessment, including training for individual departments and adjuncts
10. In order to improve retention and persistence, improve the systematic collection and analysis of information from and about students
11. Take steps to implement recommendations from surveys on classroom space and technology, including the Instructional Space Utilization Study, to enhance the teaching and learning environment and better support enrollment
12. Improve the goals, training, and assessment of student academic advising
13. Develop goals and implement a plan to improve faculty compensation, including that of part-time faculty, with reference to national and regional benchmarks

14. Build upon the current Teaching and Learning Committee to create a formal Teaching and Learning Center to support excellence in faculty teaching
15. Improve procedures for regularly updating the Faculty Handbook to keep it accurate and current
16. Evaluate the need for a college-wide writing program
17. Increase communication and articulation between the traditional day program and Accelerated Degree Programs (ADP)
18. Continue to assess institutional obstacles to ADP's ability to develop new programs in response to its market
19. Explore a replacement for the Summer Start program as an opportunity for incoming academically at-risk students
20. Evaluate the desirability and options for implementing an experiential learning graduation requirement for all students

The data, analyses, and conversations that have emerged from the last two years have proved enormously beneficial, and we look forward to continuing this work of improvement. We will build upon our strengths, while remaining open to change and renewal as we move forward into the next decade.





**Middle States Commission on Higher Education**

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**CERTIFICATION STATEMENT:**

**Compliance with MSCHE Requirements of Affiliation**

**[For use by institutions addressing the Accreditation Standards in *Characteristics of Excellence: Requirements of Affiliation and Standards for Accreditation (12<sup>th</sup> ed., 2006)*]**

*Effective August 1, 2015*

**ALBRIGHT COLLEGE**

is seeking (*Check one*):       Initial Accreditation  
                                          Reaffirmation of Accreditation through Self Study  
                                          Reaffirmation of Accreditation through Periodic Review


An institution seeking **initial accreditation** or **reaffirmation of accreditation** must affirm that it meets or continues to meet established MSCHE Requirements of Affiliation.


*This signed certification statement must be attached to the executive summary of the institution's self-study or periodic review report.*


The undersigned hereby certify that the institution meets Requirements of Affiliation of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education as published in *Characteristics of Excellence: Requirements of Affiliation and Standards for Accreditation (12<sup>th</sup> ed., 2006)*.

If it is not possible to certify compliance with all requirements specified herein, the institution must attach specific details in a separate memorandum.

Exceptions are noted in the attached memorandum (*Check if applicable*)

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Chief Executive Officer)  
Dr. Lex O. McMillan III

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Chair, Board of Trustees or Directors)  
Jeffrey J. Joyce

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

## CHAPTER 1

### OVERVIEW OF ALBRIGHT COLLEGE AND ITS SELF-STUDY PROCESS

#### **An Introduction to Albright College**

Founded in 1856, Albright College is a private, selective, primarily undergraduate and residential national liberal arts college in Reading, Pennsylvania. Albright enrolls approximately 1,800 full-time undergraduates, more than 600 non-traditional undergraduate students, and a small group of graduate students. The College's flexible interdisciplinary curriculum, based in a commitment to the liberal arts and sciences and a growing range of experiential learning opportunities, is complemented by a close-knit residential learning environment for its traditional students. A diverse, supportive community of scholars and learners helps students exceed their own expectations. Our mission: "To inspire and educate the scholar and leader in each student, building on a strong foundation in the liberal arts and sciences and a commitment to the best of human values, fostering a commitment to a lifetime of service and learning." As stated in our vision for the College, we "excel in offering an integrative learning experience that synthesizes theory with practice, promotes critical thinking and effective self-expression.... We seek to educate individuals of integrity who possess intellectual competencies and personal qualities that will enable them to take up positions of leadership and service whatever their chosen fields and thereby add to the richness, diversity, and welfare of our global society."

The College traces its founding to Union Seminary in 1856, making it the oldest institution of higher learning in Berks County, Pennsylvania. The present Albright College was formed by a series of mergers with other institutions of higher learning founded in the 19th century by the Evangelical Association and the United Evangelical Church. Currently, Albright College is affiliated with the United Methodist Church. In 2005 Albright formally reaffirmed its affiliation with the UMC, noting the College's historic roots in the Evangelical and Methodist traditions. Today, Albright is a religiously diverse community, with a full-time chaplain who directs the College's Multi-Faith Center. The Center has offices for student religious groups, along with a comfortable meeting space for Christian Bible study, Buddhist meditation, Jewish Shabbat dinners, Muslim prayer, and other activities. Albright provides services and resources to support the spiritual needs and spiritual growth of all community members.

Albright offers more than 50 undergraduate majors, all firmly grounded in the liberal arts. The College's flexible interdisciplinary curriculum encourages students to combine majors and disciplines to tailor their academic program to meet their needs and interests. More than 60 percent of graduates

complete combined majors, resulting in more than 150 unique combinations of academic programs. Our 110 traditional full-time faculty members support a 14:1 student-faculty ratio in our traditional program. For more than a decade, the College has been named one of the best schools in the Northeast by the *Princeton Review*, which commends Albright's commitment to interdisciplinary education, small classes, discussion-based learning, and high level of student involvement. In 2011, *Newsweek* listed Albright among the top 25 schools in the country for artistic students, and the College's Theatre Department has won numerous accolades from the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival for its innovative productions. In 2014 *Billboard* ranked the College's music business program among the top 35 in North America, and our Fashion Merchandising major has been consistently recognized as one of the top private programs in the nation by Fashion-Schools.org.

Albright has been a regional pioneer in accelerated learning for working adults. The College's Accelerated Degree Programs are offered at 10 locations in Eastern Pennsylvania, including the Reading campus. Majors include accounting, business administration, crime and justice, digital communications, computer and information systems, organizational behavior/applied psychology, and computer information systems and management. The College also offers master of arts and master of science degrees in education.

Albright is a residential college, with approximately 70% of traditional-age students living on campus. Another 20% live in local rental properties within walking distance of the campus. To further strengthen our residential culture and community, a four-year residential requirement is being implemented for Fall 2017. The College offers traditional, apartment, and house-style accommodations. Dozens of student organizations engage student interests in areas such as the arts, the environment, gaming, religion, media, fashion, sports, the outdoors, community service, Greek life, and more. Albright fields 23 intercollegiate athletics teams, among the most in NCAA Division III, and we recently added men's and women's lacrosse. We are members of the Middle Atlantic Conference, founded in 1912.

With more than 40% of its students identifying as a member of a racial or ethnic minority, Albright enjoys uncommon diversity among small, residential liberal arts colleges. *US News & World Report's* 2017 rankings list Albright as 30<sup>th</sup> among 219 national liberal arts colleges for ethnic diversity and 21<sup>st</sup> among 214 for economic diversity. The current academic year's students come from 31 states and 10 countries, and more than a third are first-generation higher-education enrollees. Almost half the students in recent incoming classes are eligible for Pell grants. For the past four years, the College's first-year retention rate has averaged over 74%, with overall retention averaging over 82%.

Albright faculty members are gifted teachers and active scholars. They are deeply dedicated to their students, who frequently cite the relationships they develop with their instructors as among the most memorable of their experiences at the College. Distinctive at Albright is the College's Project for Faculty Work-Life Balance, made possible through a generous grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation for Faculty Career Flexibility, which developed resources to facilitate a more balanced lifestyle for faculty, such as job-shares, family leave, and tenure clock stoppage, among other initiatives. The College also received a grant from the American Council on Education and the Sloan Foundation for innovative work in faculty retirement, which includes a five-phase retirement program, transition support and planning, and a house on campus dedicated to retired faculty office and social space.

As of December 31, 2016, Albright had an endowment of over \$65 million, including funds held in trust by others. The College was named Small Nonprofit of the Year by *Foundation & Endowment Money Management* magazine in June 2013 for its success at managing its portfolio. Under the current president, Dr. Lex O. McMillan III, Albright has made important strides in upgrading its physical plant and addressing deferred maintenance, investing over \$80 million in capital improvements. Since the last Self-Study, Albright has, among other enhancements, renovated and expanded its Science Center; completed the renovation and adaptive reuse of a facility now housing the Department of Business, Accounting & Economics, the Department of Political Science, the Center for Excellence in Local Government, and the College's Accelerated Degree Programs; and built a new, state-of-the-art fitness center for students, employees, and neighbors.

Albright College is committed to all facets of a liberal arts education. Recently the College revised its general education curriculum to help students better know, engage, and understand the world. This re-visioning included adding a first-year seminar, a "Connections" requirement that emphasizes comparative values in a global context, a "Synthesis" general education capstone for all students, and overall a more intentional, sequenced set of educational experiences to complement each student's work in the major and illuminate its linkages to other fields of study. In the past five years the College has also added interdisciplinary majors in digital communications, digital studio arts, digital video arts, game and simulation development, public health, and urban affairs, as well as minors in medieval and Renaissance studies and classical studies. We are also committed to experiential learning and excel in undergraduate research. Building on the Albright Creative Research Experience (ACRE) program, which finances collaborative research and creative projects between students and professors, Albright won grants from the Andrew W. Mellon and Hearst foundations to expand these opportunities for students in the humanities and for low-income, historically underrepresented students in the sciences,

respectively. The College also recently launched a campus-wide globalization effort, a tactic linked to high-impact learning. Balancing the traditional liberal arts with emerging fields and technologies, building on strengths and expanding opportunities, Albright College is preparing students for success in a changing twenty-first century in which liberal arts skills and capacities offer the most durable and practical education.

The College is governed by an engaged and effective Board of Trustees, which currently consists of 30 members. President McMillan has served at Albright since May 2005. Supporting him are five vice presidents, for academic affairs, enrollment management, student affairs, administrative and financial services, and advancement. Shared governance is strong in Albright's culture and characterized by a robust committee structure in which faculty and administration address issues together. In March 2016, President McMillan announced his intention to retire at the end of May 2017. The Board of Trustees quickly retained a national executive search firm to assist the search for a new president and formed a search committee to lead the process, chaired by trustee Chuck Phillips '80 and comprised of elected faculty members, administrators and staff, students, trustees, and alumni. The committee completed its work in Fall 2016, and on October 28 announced Dr. Jacquelyn Fetrow, an alumna and then provost at University of Richmond, as Albright's fifteenth president. She assumes her role June 1, 2017.

In 2012 the Board of Trustees approved "Strategic Plan 2012-2016: Charting a Course for the 2020 Graduate and Beyond." The trustees later extended the plan through May 2018 to allow for the Middle States re-accreditation process to inform the development and implementation of Albright's next strategic plan. Dr. Fetrow will oversee creation of a new strategic plan that will lead the College forward.

## ALBRIGHT'S SELF-STUDY PROCESS

The College's re-accreditation effort began in January 2015, when President McMillan appointed Dr. Joseph M. Thomas, associate provost and academic dean, and Dr. Jennifer Koosed, professor of religious studies, as co-chairs of the Self-Study Steering Committee. Drs. Thomas and Koosed, in consultation with then-Provost Dr. Andrea Chapdelaine, President McMillan, and the chair of the College's Assessment Committee, Dr. Brian Buerke, agreed to propose a comprehensive Self-Study model and to arrange the fourteen Standards of *Characteristics of Excellence* into six chapters, each to be addressed by a working group, with a seventh working group to address federal compliance. They subsequently designated a Steering Committee of seven faculty members and seven administrators



across the range of faculty departments and administrative divisions, which ratified the approach being taken. The Steering Committee assembled personnel for each working group from the faculty, staff, students, and trustees. It has met monthly during the Self-Study process, and the Committee and co-chairs have made use of both routine and special venues to inform and engage College stakeholders about this important work.

In addition to demonstrating compliance with the MSCHE Standards for accreditation, the College has used the Self-Study process to investigate and discuss a range of issues to determine how well the institution is fulfilling its mission to provide a quality education in a liberal arts context. The conversations, data, assessment, and recommendations that the Self-Study process has generated will be the ideal foundation on which to build the College's next strategic plan. The College is in the midst of considerable change and renewal. As noted above, President McMillan will retire at the end of May 2017, and in 2016 both a new provost and vice president for academic affairs, Dr. Mary McGee, and new vice president for enrollment management, Paul Cramer '87, joined us. The Self-Study process provided an excellent opportunity for them and other key administrators to engage all aspects of the College and consider its future direction. For all of those reasons, the comprehensive Self-Study model has proven to be the most timely and constructive vehicle to carry the College forward.

## CHAPTER 2

### FULFILLING ALBRIGHT'S MISSION THROUGH EFFECTIVE PLANNING

This chapter addresses *Characteristics of Excellence* Standards 1 (Mission and Goals), 2 (Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal), and 3 (Institutional Resources), and was first drafted by Self-Study working group number one, co-chaired by Albright's chief financial officer and the chair of the Business, Accounting and Economics Department. It explores Albright College's core values and goals and the means by which we reach them and assure institutional renewal. These guiding principles drive the planning and operations that ensure adequate support for programs and functions serving the College's mission, helping us meet the educational goals set for our students. The past several years have seen a marked improvement in the College's short- and long-term planning, especially regarding finances and facilities, and Albright continues to refine its fiscal modeling to better adapt to an unstable economic environment. The College meets the Standards addressed in this chapter and offers the recommendations and suggestions listed at the end.

#### **Aligning Mission, Values, and Goals**

Albright's stated mission and values put the College in the mainstream of American higher education and among long-established traditions of liberal arts education. The mission, which is widely accessible to internal and external audiences via the web, publications, and on campus in physical spaces, is "to inspire and educate the scholar and leader in each student, building on a strong foundation in the liberal arts and sciences and a commitment to the best of human values, fostering a commitment to a lifetime of service and learning." This mission is further elaborated in important ways in the statement of vision and values that is also publicly available. As a small, independent liberal arts college that seeks to develop "educated, discerning citizens of the world," Albright participates actively in several national organizations whose activities and missions are formative for the sector of American higher education with which the College aligns itself, for example the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC), the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (NAICU) and its regional counterpart the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Pennsylvania (AICUP), the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), and the Annapolis Group.

In particular, like AAC&U's national Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) initiative, Albright approaches college learning as empowering individuals to deal with complexity, diversity, and change through the acquisition of broad knowledge of the wider world (e.g., science, culture, and society), in-depth achievement in at least one specific field of study, a sense of societal responsibility, and strong cross-disciplinary intellectual and practical skills (e.g., communication, analytical, and

problem-solving skills). These goals, consistent with LEAP “essential learning outcomes,” are embodied in Albright’s overall general education goals of “Knowing the World, Engaging the World, and Understanding the World” and in the outcomes associated with each. Albright’s president (who is among the founding members of LEAP’s Presidents Trust), cabinet, and deans have been active advocates internally and externally for liberal arts education and the LEAP goals in particular, especially high-impact practices such as our first-year seminar and the different forms of experiential learning that we encourage among our students. Particular outcomes and practices are addressed in later chapters.

One aspect of the mission that has received recent emphasis is commitment to community, an essential part of our desire to cultivate values, leadership, and service. Albright has a long history of civic engagement and has partnered with the City of Reading, County of Berks, other Berks academic institutions, and various organizations on numerous projects and programs in ways that involve students, faculty, and staff. A few of the formal collaborations that exemplify our mission of service and life-long learning include the following:

- The Center for Excellence in Local Government (CELG), for over twenty years a unique partnership among the academic, public, and private sectors in Berks County, has expanded its assistance to local government officials by responding to their needs in improving public policies and the delivery of public services. More than 700 local government officials now participate annually in events focused on best practices, skills, and better understanding of local government, and CELG affords Albright students an opportunity to engage local and regional issues and policies.
- Albright’s partnerships with the Reading School District improve local K-12 education. The 13<sup>th</sup> and Union Partnership, established in 2004 but expanded in 2012 with foundation support, provides practicum and service-learning opportunities for our students while supporting this elementary school’s learning needs. We also partner with the Dearden Foundation to provide national-quality leadership training at Reading High School and are developing other projects with Northeast Middle School, all efforts to invest strategically and beneficially in our neighborhood and the city’s public school system.
- The Edwin & Alma N. Lakin ’51 Holocaust Library & Resource Center, for over twenty years a joint initiative of Albright College and the Jewish Federation of Reading, provides resources and programming to community members and schools about the Nazi Holocaust and other genocides, and recently won a grant from the Council of Independent Colleges to digitize some of its unique holdings.

- The Albright radio station, WXAC-FM, devotes a significant amount of air time to community programming, including 53 hours per week of the only non-commercial Spanish-language programming in the county. It was recently moved to an improved campus location to which we invited BCTV, the Berks County community-access television station, in an effort to build community collaboration and enhance experiential learning opportunities for our students interested in careers in media and communications.

The College mission is evaluated each time the Strategic Plan is renewed, which assures that the wide constituency, feedback, and consensus-building associated with the Strategic Plan process also applies to the mission statement. The most recent such process occurred in 2011-2012, when “Strategic Plan 2012-2016: Charting a Course for the 2020 Graduate and Beyond” was developed and approved. As already noted, this plan was subsequently extended to 2018 by action of the board, in May 2015, in order to have a plan in place during the Self-Study process and so that the results of the process could inform the next plan. A successor plan will be created after the next president joins the College in 2017.

During the most recent planning process, about two-thirds of surveyed faculty, staff, administration, trustees, and alumni expressed some level of agreement that our mission and vision are clearly stated. The inclusiveness of the strategic planning process began with the composition of the Strategic Planning Committee itself. Albright had previously revised its Strategic Plan at the close of the prior decennial accreditation review, in 2006-2007, using a wide-ranging committee of twenty-two senior administrators and faculty members. The 2012 plan was the product of an intentionally smaller Strategic Planning Committee of twelve junior and senior members of the campus community (two senior faculty members; two trustees; the directors of the Accelerated Degree Programs, Alumni Relations, Human Resources, Admission, and Student Activities; the Manager of Network and Computer Support; and the Assistant Director of Institutional Research). Their charge was: “Be creative and transparent; avoid group think; stay true to the mission of Albright College; and keep the final product succinct, clear, and simple” (p. 7).

The process included focus groups made up of students, alumni, faculty, the College Leadership Team (director-level and above administrators), the President’s Cabinet, and the Board of Trustees. In addition, a community survey garnered responses from 146 stakeholders – faculty members, administrative staff, trustees, and alumni – whose opinions helped direct the resulting plan (e.g., the plan’s emphasis on experiential learning, community engagement, and revitalizing the interim [January] term). After a draft of the plan was completed, an external consulting firm (Tweed-Weber, Inc.)

facilitated informal discussions with groups of faculty and with the president's Cabinet. There was substantive discussion of the mission statement, including a survey question that confirmed strongly the perception of the clarity of the mission and vision statements, which went unchanged and remained deeply embedded as a force in the new strategic plan and in the three fundamental strategic goals decided upon: fostering academic excellence, strengthening our learning community, and increasing development and stewardship of resources. Each goal was to be "subject to one over-arching question: 'How do we enhance the educational experience for our students?'" (p. 8)

The Strategic Plan's three fundamental priorities were divided into actionable areas as follows:

1. *Foster Academic Excellence*: 1.1 Expand and strengthen academic programs; 1.2 Support the faculty; 1.3 Enhance the learning environment.
2. *Strengthen Our Learning Community*: 2.1 Enhance experiential learning opportunities; 2.2 Enhance the campus environment; 2.3 Support student development and model civic engagement.
3. *Increase Development and Stewardship of Resources*: 3.1 Human Resources; 3.2 Financial Resources; 3.3 Physical Resources; 3.4 Brand/Marketing Resources; 3.5 Information/Data Resources.

As will be discussed below, each sub-goal was parsed into specific action items that directly support student learning, the faculty, and institutional improvements. Goal-setting, on both the institutional and unit levels, must be linked explicitly to these strategic goals and initiatives, which operationalize the mission and guide all planning efforts across the College.

Communication with the College community concerning strategic planning and outcomes is one responsibility of the Assessment Committee, which relies in part on the Strategic Planning, Institutional Research, and Assessment (SPIRA) website, located on the College intranet. SPIRA brings together much of the College's planning, research, and assessment operations under one umbrella. The President is the chief spokesperson for the College's overall progress, health, and significant improvements through periodic reports to the Board of Trustees and to the general College community, especially in his August State of the College addresses, which are available through SPIRA. Progress on the strategic plan is reported in several ways. At the institutional level, an annual progress report on strategic goals has been made available to the Board and to the campus and made accessible through SPIRA. The College also assesses progress on aspects of the Strategic Plan through a set of Key Strategic Indicators (see pp. 3-4) tied to each of the three fundamental strategic priorities of the plan and updated several times per year. A comprehensive institutional tool for tracking progress was designed from the outset of the new plan. However, this "Strategic Plan Implementation" document



has not been effectively used. The College should improve its use or revise the instrument and process, or both. Together these assessment resources and tools show Albright to be completing or making progress on the majority of the goals that comprise the three fundamental strategic priorities.

The College has long aligned its communication to internal and external audiences with its mission. For example, the College's primary magazine (*The Albright Reporter*) regularly profiles alumni engaged in service activities and students and faculty whose work is rooted in the liberal arts; the Admission magazine (*albright!*) promotes Albright's enduring liberal arts education and "communication, critical thinking, analytical adeptness, flexibility, [and] teamwork" as "the lifelong skills you'll gain at Albright College"; news releases routinely refer to aspects of mission, for example the "lifetime of service" concept in stories about the College's Alternative Spring Break programs; and Development materials and activities focus on the benefits of Albright's liberal arts education and how today's students need support to gain these benefits.

However, as acknowledged in its 2012 Periodic Review Report, the College has needed to do a better job of spreading its message clearly and consistently. No single brand message was being conveyed uniformly to the College's internal and external audiences, despite a branding toolkit aligned with the College's mission having been available for many years. Hence the 2012 Strategic Plan included (p. 14) a charge to address branding/marketing resources so that Albright could better communicate its liberal arts mission and academic quality.

While resource challenges slowed this effort, in 2015 the College undertook a comprehensive market research campaign with the firm of SimpsonScarborough. Interviews of and surveys with faculty members, administrators, current and prospective students (both traditional-age undergraduate and adult learners), parents of prospective students, high school counselors, and alumni provided a wealth of data that were used to develop a new brand strategy. This strategy comprised a brand promise, brand positioning statement, brand pillars, key messages, and brand personality. Using the brand strategy, the College developed and tested options for a new visual identity and strategic marketing communications direction. This process was widely shared with the faculty, staff, students, and trustees. The President announced the project to all employees and students on March 24, 2015; findings from the quantitative research were presented in a community forum on September 29. The Associate VP for College Relations and Marketing presented, sometimes with the consultants, numerous times to the faculty, to students, and to various administrative departments in 2015-2016.

After feedback from the campus community as well as high school students, the President and Cabinet approved a new logo, color palette, and recruitment marketing campaign in the summer of 2016. The new messaging and visual identity were launched in August and celebrated at a campus event in November; they are being rolled out throughout the 2017 fiscal year. Included in this effort are letterhead, street banners, campus signage, Admission and ADP publications and advertisements, marketing collateral for campus events, and more.

The College website is also being addressed as a separate but related priority, to make it more accessible, student-focused, engaging, reflective of brand identity, and easier to maintain. The College engaged the creative firm Ologie for this project. Ologie interviewed campus stakeholders as part of its discovery process, audited Albright's website and those of peer institutions, and conducted a brainstorming session with four College staffers at its Columbus, Ohio, offices. The firm proposed a new site map, which the College reviewed and approved, and is using the SimpsonScarborough market research and resulting creative rebranding to develop user interface options and page designs. A campus committee comprising two vice presidents, a faculty member, and several administrators is serving as the core team working with Ologie on the project, which is expected to last through spring 2017.

As part of the website redevelopment project, the College needs to address how to maintain and update pages in a way that is timely and that offers quality control. One option is to appoint a web maintenance working group containing representatives from every division who will be responsible for updating their respective colleagues' pages. This group would meet regularly to discuss issues and ensure that the process is working effectively. College Relations should also consider restructuring to include personnel with the technical skills to work in WordPress and the communications skills to develop, post, and approve content from across the campus.

### **Enacting the Mission Through Effective Planning**

The hallmark of an effective institution is its linkage of mission to goals, budget, and assessment through its planning processes. Planning at Albright occurs in two modes, long-term and short-term, at both the College level and the division/department level. These two modes of process are linked through the requirement to submit annual reporting, annual goals, and annual budgets with explicit references to the College's long-term strategic plan, "Strategic Plan 2012-2018: Charting a Course for the 2020 Graduate and Beyond." Albright's annual planning process is therefore grounded in the College's mission and goals at every level; details follow below in this chapter.

## **Long-Term Planning Overview**

In addition to the Strategic Plan, other long-term planning tools assure institutional effectiveness and renewal. Capital and property planning is specified in the Albright College Master Plan, which was adopted in 2009 and guides development of resources and initiatives while remaining responsive to potential opportunities as they arise, especially concerning adjacent or nearby properties. Similar to the Strategic Plan, this Master Plan was developed with community input and opportunity for feedback. The Master Planning process began with interviews and surveys that enabled our architects, Spillman Farmer, to work toward a plan that reflects Albright's values and vision for its future. Regular assessment of academic and administrative departments, as well as surveys that benchmark the College against peer institutions, help us to monitor how well we meet the expectations of our constituents and identify needs. For example, assessment of our library facilities in the HEDS senior survey (see figure 4 in that survey) showed that student satisfaction, while not poor, was rated the farthest below our comparison group's scores.

Other long-term planning processes necessary to the well-being of the College include a five-year financial plan, a strategic plan for information technology investment (both discussed later in this chapter), and a five-year enrollment plan. The enrollment plan is both an assessment tool and a planning document for admission, financial aid, and retention. It serves as both a review of the strengths and weaknesses of the past year's recruitment, financial aid, and retention efforts and an outline for new plans for the upcoming year. We continue to strive toward a more integrated enrollment management philosophy, and the five-year enrollment model presented in the plan is an important ingredient in the College's budgeting process, as will be discussed.

Long-term planning is also an important part of division and department processes that affect the operations and educational programs of the College. On the academic side, each department takes part periodically in a detailed Academic Program Review (APR). Each department prepares a self-study which includes discussion of its mission, an examination of enrollment/teaching and outcomes data over time, alumni feedback, and curriculum in the context of peer institutions. The APR includes an external review and gives department members the opportunity to reflect upon their successes and set directions for improvement, embodied in goals which span five to ten years. The department's plan is to be aligned with the strategic plan of the College and guide annual goal setting and resource allocation going forward. The APR has resulted in curricular and facilities improvements and in thoughtful planning about departmental mission and staffing. See, for example, sample action plans for Business, Religious Studies, Sociology, and Theatre. Theatre identified important capital needs and had them met, while Sociology made important changes to its major requirements. Business decided

to pursue specialized professional accreditation to better compete with peers, merged with the Accounting department, and revised its curriculum after its review. On the administrative side, the Administrative Area Program Review (AAPR), begun in 2013, includes similar elements of assessment, peer comparison, and planning in the context of the strategic plan. To date this process is less well implemented than the APR, an issue which is being addressed at the Cabinet level. Both processes include responses to assessment derived from both internal data (collected as a part of College-wide surveys and surveys specific to the review at hand) and an external review.

### **Short-Term Planning Overview**

The long perspective resulting from these long-term planning processes is translated into manageable annual goals through short-term planning processes that begin with the Strategic Plan Annual Priorities determined by the Cabinet in the fall. Cabinet decides them after review of the previous June's end-of-year reports, which present that year's results in the context of the Strategic Plan. For example, the fiscal 2015 outcomes described in the June 2015 end-of-year reports prompted the administration's strategic priorities for fiscal 2017. These annual priorities were then communicated by the Provost to division and department heads, both academic and administrative, in October along with instructions on goal-setting for fiscal year 2017 and the official Planning, Budget and Assessment Calendar. As indicated in the guidelines and templates used for the goal-setting process, all unit goals must refer back to the strategic plan goals and sub-goals that directly support student learning, the faculty, and institutional improvements. Each department develops yearly goals in light of the announced College strategic priorities, its own prior year-end report results, and any outstanding action plan items related to departmental reviews, with the Strategic Plan of the College underlying all of these. For FY18, the Academic Affairs Division is piloting a revised template to strengthen the documentation of annual goals and assessment results in a single report. The pilot is an improvement action responding to Assessment Committee review of the 2015-2016 EOY reports, which noted a disconnect between submitted goal documents and end-of-year assessment reports. Results of the pilot, along with feedback from Academic Affairs directors and department heads, will be used to advance the annual goal and assessment process under the new strategic plan.

Like reporting and planning, budgeting must be keyed to specific goals in the Strategic Plan, thereby ensuring that goals, budgeting, and assessment all grow from the plan. The budget process, which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter, begins shortly after the goal-setting period and is launched with distribution by the Controller's Office of a budget kick-off document. The integration of the budgeting process with the College Strategic Plan is explicit in budgeting instructions, most importantly regarding requests for additional resources: "If, as a result of your assessment efforts

reported to your Vice President, you can justify a need for additional budget resources in order to accomplish your submitted FY17 goals, which are consistent with the College's Strategic Plan, please budget the estimated costs in the appropriate natural code(s); and detail the justification, including the assessment results and corresponding goals/objectives ....” (p. 4). A spot check of fiscal 2017 budget sheets shows them to be consistent in providing a justification for an increase. For example, the Accelerated Degree Programs requested an additional \$9,000 due to a rent increase at an off-campus location, and the Experiential Learning and Career Development Center requested an extra \$2,000 to increase staff development for study abroad.

In fall 2015, two important changes were made to the budget process to enhance its effectiveness. First, the start of the budget process was moved forward from mid-November to the third week of October to integrate the budget process more closely with the goal-setting process. Second, operating budget templates were adjusted to segregate new funding requests from existing budget dollars. The latter change has increased transparency and facilitated review of new departmental requests by the respective Vice Presidents and the Cabinet. Previously, existing and new requests were combined, and it was less clear which requests were new.

The budget process provides multiple opportunities for collaborative input and prioritization of requests. For example, a committee discusses and ranks requests submitted by budget managers, a process enhanced in 2015 to include two committees, one focused on information technology-related requests and another on facilities-related requests. The committees included both faculty members and staff to represent the campus comprehensively. A consolidated recommendation of capital priorities is then provided to Cabinet for approval. For fiscal 2017 this collaborative approach proved especially useful, because the limited capital funding available required significant negotiation to arrive at a balanced budget. Following Cabinet's approval in March/April, the Board of Trustees reviews and approves the budget in May. Beginning in 2015, the Cabinet review process has also included participation of the chair of the Faculty Executive Committee and the chair of the Faculty Budget Committee. This allows broader faculty input into final priorities and more transparency. Note that the current fiscal 2018 budget process departs in some respects from the norm just described. As discussed below, budget managers this year are working with a streamlined process meant to make progress on meeting our persistent, structural budget challenges.

### **The City of Reading as a Context for Planning**

Albright College is an anchor institution in the northeastern corner of Reading and, as discussed earlier, has a long, mission-based tradition of engagement with the city and county. Conditions in



Reading and in our neighborhood of College Heights directly affect our students, and conditions both real and perceived have an impact on how Albright College is viewed. We are mindful of the economic contribution to the region made by our College, estimated by AICUP to be \$85 million, in addition to the activities of faculty members, staff, and students who serve the community and promote quality of life. Albright as an institution takes this responsibility seriously, participating fully in the planning and development of its own neighborhood.

The President convenes a Community Leaders Advisory Council, and the College cooperates with the College Heights neighborhood association and plays a leadership role in the Village of College Heights task force, which brings residents, schools, businesses, foundations, and the College together to collaborate on neighborhood improvements. Various offices and students also engage cooperatively with our neighborhood, and, because safety is always a concern at a residential college, Albright Public Safety coordinates closely with the two municipal police departments, those of Muhlenberg Township and Reading, that serve our location (the campus has facilities in both of these adjacent municipalities).

Our Master Plan considers opportunities that emerge in our immediate area of the city. In addition, we remain alert to unplanned opportunities which can arise through transitions in property ownership, which can bring both potential benefits and potential risks to the College's environment. As properties become available, strategic discussions take place among senior leaders including the Board of Trustees' Property, Land, and Equipment subcommittee; several examples are provided below. One such instance is the strategic leasing of the Camp Building, a former textile mill immediately adjacent to our campus. The building was purchased by a group known as Friends of Albright (FOA), which leases space to the College and other external tenants. In July 2016, the College entered into an agreement of sale with FOA to acquire the Camp Building on or before December 31, 2018. The College's leasing of space in the Camp Building, and commitment to purchase the property, has preserved flexibility in the future use of the property and allowed us to relocate administrative support services while increasing the size of our student academic support services (now located in the former finance office). Second, with the support of the local Wyomissing Foundation, the College has played a leadership role in developing a vision for the renovation, expansion, and modernization of an aging retail strip mall beside the campus on Rockland Street, which will be the home of a new residence hall, restaurants, and shops. The residence hall is a private venture that will be managed by Albright's residence life staff and will add needed residential capacity, providing students a high quality living environment and reducing the presence of student renters in the surrounding residential neighborhoods. In addition, in recent months, the College has acted on key, nearby real estate opportunities outlined in the 2009 Campus Master Plan. In May 2016, the College entered into an

option agreement with Galiyano Associates to purchase the David Crystal property along the east side of 13<sup>th</sup> Street on or before December 2018; the property will be used to develop a future track and field facility. And, in November 2016, the College purchased a new primary residence of the President of the College that is closer to campus, able to host larger groups, and accessible for those with adaptive needs; the current Presidential residence will be sold. In all these ways, the College is actively strengthening its neighborhood for our residential students.

### **Enacting the Mission Through Effective Management and Allocation of Resources**

As discussed earlier, increased development and stewardship of institutional resources is one of the three fundamental goals in the College's Strategic Plan (p. 11). At the core of this priority is the need to manage institutional resources in the most effective and efficient manner possible to deliver quality services to our campus community. The College defines institutional resources broadly to include human resources, physical infrastructure, and all other operating and capital resources needed to accomplish the College's goals. The College effectively allocates institutional resources through comprehensive and inclusive resource planning. This section will provide an overview of the College's five-year financial planning and its assumptions, then provide detail on the management of expenses and revenues, and finally will review the financial reporting and controls that ensure responsible stewardship of College financial resources. Included here is a recognition that Albright must take steps to improve its operation model to better align revenues and expenses.

### **Five-Year Budget Planning and Its Assumptions**

Albright employs multi-year financial planning to provide context and direction for the College's short-term and long-term resource needs. The Five-Year Plan is a living model regularly presented at numerous venues during the year, including the Faculty Budget Committee, faculty meetings, Cabinet meetings, and at each meeting of the Finance Committee of the Board of Trustees. These discussions provide important opportunities for input. Since 2014 the plan assumptions have been updated on a continuing basis throughout the year, which has enhanced the College's focus on adaptive long-term, strategic financial planning.

At a minimum, the College operates under the guiding premise of a balanced budget in which operating revenues are equal to or greater than operating expenses. Through the use of the Five Year Plan, overarching institutional trends can be discerned and summarized, including projected highs and lows in total student enrollment and related changes to net tuition revenue, overall revenues and expenses, and the net available from current operations (or operating margin). This longer-term view provides an important context for short-term institutional needs and available resources of the

institution. Specifically, this information helps guide development of the College’s operating budget for the next two fiscal years. For example, in fall 2015, even though a modest operating surplus of \$820,000 was projected for the next fiscal year (FY17) based on budget assumptions at that time, budget managers were directed to submit budget requests reflecting an assumption that resources would remain flat; the financial plan led us to expect a one-time enrollment increase that would decrease the following year, so the College knew to hold resources steady in FY17 to avoid cutting resources in FY18. The College’s capital planning takes a similar long-term approach by asking budget managers to submit needs anticipated over the next five fiscal years.

The College regularly analyzes its financial planning in the context of institutional comparisons regarding resources, expenditures, and allocations. One of the primary data sources used is the annual Financial Analysis and Trends (FAAT) Study published by the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Pennsylvania (AICUP). Our Institutional Research department produces multiple analyses using these data, including where the College ranks in relation to our comparison college group and the broader AICUP group on 28 different metrics that are presented in a three-year trend window, such as total resources per FTE enrollment, market value of endowment per FTE enrollment, educational expenses per FTE enrollment, and institutional tuition discount. One example of FAAT comparative data from the latest available version is its table of capital expenses as a percent of operating budget, which includes an institution-by-institution list of figures for 15 peers and a summary comparison (only the summary table is reproduced here because individual peer information is confidential):

Table 2.1. Example FAAT Summary Comparison (2015)

<b>Capital expense to operations (%)</b>	<b>FY2013</b>	<b>FY2014</b>	<b>FY2015</b>
Albright College	13.9	13.8	13.3
Comparison Group Median	10.2	11.4	10.6
Comparison Group Mean	11.2	11.5	11.4

The FAAT also allows specific focus and analysis of the College’s functional resource allocation in particular – the percentage of resources allocated to instruction, research, public service, academic support, institutional support, and other categories relative to comparison colleges. These data are discussed on an annual basis in multiple settings. An annual discussion, led by Institutional Research, takes place at Cabinet, and the College’s finance team and external auditors present subsets of the data to the full Board of Trustees as part of the annual review and approval of the financial statements each October. This past May the focus was on how institutions categorize educational and

instructional expenses, the fact that Albright does not categorize expenses under public service, and that our spending is relatively low in educational expense categories (FAAT pages 12-14).

The financial Five-Year Plan uses several key assumptions that together set the stage for budget decisions. These assumptions include projections of enrollment (discussed below), fundraising metrics, healthcare and benefits changes, planned increases to the salary pool and long-term increases to faculty positions, and projected inflators for utilities and depreciation expense, among others. Because enrollment, financial aid, human resources, and infrastructure are key to sustaining the College's overall health and effectiveness, they are discussed in turn below, emphasizing enrollment and related financial aid as the key assumptions for financial planning.

Albright is highly dependent on student revenue; 61% of the FY2016 total operating revenue came from net tuition and fees, which puts the College above the median for tuition dependence within its comparison group; about 82% of that revenue is from the traditional undergraduate program, about 17% from the Accelerated Degree Programs, and the balance from a small group of graduate students. This reliance on student revenue grows from 61% to 84% once room and board revenues are considered. Therefore, the Five-Year Plan incorporates several interrelated enrollment assumptions. These enrollment assumptions include the numbers of incoming freshmen and transfer students expected in future fall classes, the current enrollment levels of existing freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors, and projected retention rates for each class. Important related assumptions are the average tuition discount rate assumed for incoming freshmen and transfer students and for currently enrolled students, along with projected future increases for tuition and fees, room, and board. Similarly, key enrollment variables for both the Accelerated Degree Programs and the graduate program are carefully monitored in terms of expected registrations and projected tuition and fee increases.

The College discusses enrollment as a key input into the Five-Year Plan on a regular basis throughout the year and with many constituencies, since building a stable and strong enrollment base is necessary for long-term financial sustainability. To provide additional opportunities for analysis and discussion, in 2015 the College formed a new committee called the Enrollment Planning Group (EPG), a monthly working group of key administrators and the faculty chair of the Enrollment Development Committee. The assumptions about enrollment and financial aid provided by the five-year Enrollment Plan, discussed earlier with regard to planning, provides key input for refining the Five-Year Plan.

The EPG was instrumental in a recent change in recruitment strategy that affects the assumptions of the Five-Year Plan. EPG recommended in 2015 that net tuition revenue from new students should

be considered a primary enrollment assumption instead of targeting either a specific number of new students or a specific financial aid discount rate. Concentrating on total new net tuition revenue allowed more flexibility with regard to admission and financial aid offers to prospective students. Focusing on discount rates hampered recruitment and may have contributed to an enrollment shortfall that yielded lower total net tuition revenue in FY2016; a wider range of possible outcomes involving the number of new students and their discount rate can better yield the required total net tuition revenue needed to support the budget. This approach was implemented for the fall 2016 recruitment season (FY2017) following discussions with Cabinet and the Board of Trustees. The overall net tuition revenue goal of \$8 million for the fall 2016 incoming class was achieved and demonstrated the new, more flexible paradigm discussed above; that is, while the 70% discount rate associated with the new class was 5% higher than the original goal of 65%, the College also enrolled 76 additional freshmen above the original 520 goal.

While analysis of multi-year enrollment assumptions happens regularly to support budget planning, the immediate next year’s fall enrollment is a continuing area of focus that is closely monitored both before and after the approval of next year’s budget by the Board of Trustees in May. This process has been particularly important recently, in FY2014 and 2015, when in late April and early May the number of new student deposits was lower than expected. This early warning allowed the Cabinet to immediately plan adjusted budget targets for a range of possible enrollment scenarios, and senior leadership worked throughout the early summer to identify revenue enhancements and expense reductions to meet the targets. As enrollment settled at the start of fall classes, budget action plans were identified and implemented to maintain a balanced budget. Cabinet implemented total budget actions of \$2 million for fiscal year 2015 and \$1.5 million for FY2016. The current fiscal year, FY2017, required only a modest budget action plan of \$350,000 in order to accommodate a 1% salary pool provided to employees in December, 2016, salary adjustments associated with new Fair Labor Standards Act rules, and a break-even bottom line. While developing these actions plans has been challenging, the College’s operating results for the last three fiscal years have been sound, as depicted in the table below, due in large part to the diligence of budget managers in executing these measures.

Table 2.2. FY2014 – FY2016 Operating Results

<b>Operating Results (\$ thousands)</b>	<b>2014 Actual</b>	<b>2015 Actual</b>	<b>Actual 2016</b>
Net Available from Current Operations	\$67	\$399	\$570
Change in Unrestricted Net Assets	2,560	4,016	496
Change in Total Net Assets	11,218	6,612	(447)



Like determining enrollment assumptions, establishing financial aid assumptions is also a key and comprehensive process. A major change was undertaken in fall 2013 to a “meet need” financial aid policy in the traditional undergraduate program to improve student retention and buttress freshman enrollment. This was a strategic move by the College to differentiate itself and join a small group of selective liberal arts colleges meeting 100% of a student’s institutionally determined financial need. Before, the college met about 72% of need, on average. This initiative began with discussion and marketing analysis by the directors of Admission and Financial Aid. The strategy proposal was next brought to the President’s Cabinet, the Enrollment Management Committee (made up of faculty, staff, and administrators), and the trustees. The strategy was also outlined to the full faculty (October 10, 2012). After review and input from each group, discussion with the full Board in October 2012 preceded implementation. The new strategy was mission-centric, by supporting greater college access, and responsive to the national debate on college costs. It brought a clear pricing message to the marketplace and required that Albright not be need-blind in its admission decisions. It also challenged the College to focus on its academic value, since the weight of the financial need variable was reduced.

Albright’s freshman-to-sophomore retention rate was less than 71.5% at that time, and under the new “meet need” policy this rate improved quickly over six percentage points to 77.6% (an 8.4% increase) in just two years, which is about 2.5% above the national average for institutions of our kind. However, first-year retention fell back to approximately 2013 levels in 2016; overall retention did continue to rise (to 82.5%). Improvement is particularly important given the highly competitive environment within which the College operates. The change in financial aid strategy has had several other effects to date. First, as noted above the discount rate for incoming full-time, first-year students (FTFY) has changed significantly, from the mid-to-high 40% range before Fall 2013 to approximately 70% in Fall 2016. Second, enrollment rose; new freshmen in FY2014 (the year of the change) increased over 240 students compared to fall 2012. After FY2014 new freshmen enrollment first decreased but Fall 2016 saw close to 600 new students. Increasing enrollment and the discount rate has directly affected the College’s net tuition revenue, as indicated in the table below:

Table 2.3. Traditional Undergraduate Revenue, Discounts and Enrollment, FY2012-2017

	<b>FY2012</b>	<b>FY2013</b>	<b>FY2014</b>	<b>FY2015</b>	<b>FY2016</b>
Tuition & Fees	\$54.8m	\$53.8m	\$60.8m	\$63.9m	\$65.9m
Less Financial Aid & Discounts	(26.2m)	(26.5m)	(33.0m)	(36.4m)	46.1m
Net Tuition & Fees	\$28.6m	\$27.3m	\$27.8m	\$27.5m	\$26.9m
FTFY Discount Rate	51.1%	64.1%	63.9%	63.6%	70%
Average Net Tuition & Fees	\$16,466	\$12,379	\$13,339	\$15,066	\$12,380
Enrollment: FTFY/Total	410/1588	655/1717	543/1745	493/1734	596/1854

With all four classes now under the “meet need” umbrella as of FY2017, it is important that the College carefully assess the new policy’s impact on enrollments, net revenue, and student quality. The initial model called for rebounding net revenue by 2017, which will not be the case. Other preliminary results are mixed but do reflect predictions from when this strategy began, such as increased enrollments and increased financial aid costs initially. To date academic quality has been flat, and one key expectation is an eventual increase in student quality as the academic value proposition becomes the operative admission draw. Currently the students Albright targets are less likely to be the ones who actually enroll – the discount rate on accepted FTFY students is twenty points lower than that of enrolling students (49% vs. 69%), and the overall yield on accepted students is less than 15%. The College must continue to develop its academic brand and produce stronger outcomes data to support it, and must also be even more need-aware in admissions. In December 2016, the new VP for Enrollment presented to various constituencies, including the full faculty and Faculty Budget Committee, with an update summarizing the policy’s history and effects to date.

The observations above regarding net tuition revenue are best understood within the context of larger trends. Between FY2011 to FY2016 operating revenues grew, on average, less than 1% per year. While endowment used in operations and unrestricted giving have grown by 7-8% each year, total revenues from tuition, room, and board have been nearly flat. The primary reason has been a decrease in net tuition revenue of \$1.7 million over that five-year period. Coupled with a large (80%) increase in depreciation expense due to many important capital improvements, there has been significant pressure on the institution’s operating expenses. The fully implemented “meet need” strategy is still expected to provide a more stable enrollment base and ultimately much-needed growth in net tuition revenue with anticipated retention increases.

Despite low growth in expenses (discussed later in this chapter), operating costs continue to rise relatively faster than operating revenues; this phenomenon has created a structural budget challenge for the institution. Moving forward, the College’s Five-Year Plan projects operating expenses to grow at 3-4% in the next several years, reflecting in part a continued commitment to salary increases for faculty and staff but also non-controllable costs. If operating revenues are to keep pace, the College must set and achieve realistic net tuition revenue goals and secure new funding sources. Finding the right balance of factors to optimize enrollment, maximize revenues, and maintain or increase student quality will be a continuing test for the institution. The Cabinet has already begun a year-long process of studying structural budget challenges and creating an action plan to address them, with input from faculty leadership. The College will explore and implement both revenue enhancements and expense

efficiencies. The goal of this important work is to establish a modest, recurring operating margin to help buffer the effects of enrollment revenue fluctuations. The FY2018 budget illustrates this persistent challenge. It includes a salary pool increase and a \$250,000 operating margin, but a \$2 million budget gap is projected, so college-wide adjustments are being planned and new faculty hires delayed; in recognition of this austerity, as noted earlier the FY18 budget process has been streamlined to save budget managers time as they provide critical input to Cabinet on how best to move forward. Kick-off budget presentations and discussions were held for all budget managers in November 2016 along with disseminating important budget guidance. Working with budget managers, Cabinet has made progress on both the larger structural budget challenge and the immediate FY2018 budget issues, work which will continue into spring 2017.

Establishing and evaluating tuition pricing financial aid levels are critical inputs to the five-year financial plan and annual budgeting. The annual process for setting tuition and financial aid begins early in the budgeting cycle, in November. With regard to tuition, multiple analyses are prepared to aid in the ultimate recommendation of fee levels for the subsequent year. For the traditional undergraduate program, analysis of the tuition, room, and board levels of the College's 16 comparison colleges determines the College's ranking among the group. This analysis provides a market-based perspective to ensure the College is pricing itself competitively. In general, the College's goal is to remain above the median of the comparison group but not at the top. For fiscal 2016, Albright ranked 9 of 17 in total tuition, fees, room, and board and 8 in tuition and fees, while 2015 figures in the AICUP FAAT (the latest available) ranked us 15 of 17 in net tuition revenue per FTE enrollment compared to these schools. Additional analyses model how levels of fee increase would affect the College's ranking among the group over the next five years. The College follows similar tuition-setting processes for the accelerated degree and graduate programs, using a smaller comparison set, with the overall goal of ensuring that any fee increases are competitive. Once tentative tuition, room, and board increases have been set, they are reviewed and discussed comprehensively, as described below.

In 2015, the discussion process included the recently established Enrollment Planning Group as the first forum for review. Recommended increases for each program were then provided to Cabinet for discussion in December. Cabinet agreed on a final proposal that was reviewed and approved by the Board of Trustees, initially the Enrollment Management Committee, then the Finance Committee, and finally the full Board at its January meeting, after which these become key building blocks for the budget and the evolving Five-Year Plan. The calendar for this process has now changed, however, due to a federal policy that went into effect in October 2016, called "Prior-Prior Year" or "PPY." By enabling students and families to file their FAFSA financial aid forms using tax information from two

years ago rather than one, it has the effect of pushing student applications earlier. The College saw advantages to adapting to these changes early, so in May 2016 the College-proposed tuition, room, and board fees for fall 2017 (FY2018) went to the Board of Trustees for their approval.

As noted above, one of the key assumptions for the five-year financial plan is human resource needs. Requests for changes in administrative human resources typically start with annual department goal-setting and then administrative review during the budget process in January. At this time each administrative director and/or Vice President reviews staffing levels/rosters by individual employee. Requests are prioritized according to existing funds and staffing and enrollment data. New funding streams can be created if the position is aligned with an initiative that is a potential revenue driver. Longer-term needs, such as adjusting resources due to upcoming retirements, are not only recognized during the annual budget process but are also part of the college's long-term planning process.

Individual academic departments constantly monitor faculty staffing levels, based upon ability to run courses of adequate size and number to service the major and general education requirements. When necessary, adjunct faculty members are hired to accommodate needs. For longer-term needs, departments use a process auxiliary to the usual goal-setting and budgetary processes. In the fall – although circumstances sometimes necessitate a spring meeting as well – academic departments may request full-time positions using a data-driven form; the department chair argues for the position at a joint meeting of the Provost, Faculty Executive Council, and Educational Policy Council, a group which ranks the merits of competing requests as an advisory step to the Provost. The President approves all full-time positions. Vacated tenure-track lines are re-allocated among departments according to strategic needs. These recommendations feed into the budget process.

Any institutional change to human resources must be backed by data and analysis. Online databases, such as the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), the Open Education Database (OEDb), and others have been used by Albright to gauge institutional data. IPEDS data is also used to determine how Albright is staffed overall compared to other similarly sized institutions. Albright compares trends in its faculty salary data by rank with the Mid-east region of the Council of Independent Colleges (whose data comes from IPEDS). This provides the College with an understanding of market conditions for faculty. Additional metrics, such as student-to-faculty ratios, help inform assessments of the Albright's faculty size relative to similar institutions. If the data indicate that we are over- or under-staffed in any particular department or area, analysis may occur internally between the department manager or chair, Vice President, the Director of Human Resources, and the

Cabinet when necessary. The College has also sought consultant help to analyze administrative staff needs, which led to a realignment of office support in Academic Affairs in 2012.

Facilities and technology (including the library) are other key drivers of financial planning and budget decisions to support student learning. As noted earlier, students expressed relatively low satisfaction with library facilities, and consequently a small renovation of the library first floor is underway in winter 2016-17, and major renovation of the library is planned and has been the centerpiece of the current comprehensive fundraising campaign. This envisioned hub of learning, scholarship, and community will give Albright an inviting and comfortable “learning commons” environment designed to bring together students, faculty, skilled professionals, high-end technology and information resources, and student support services.

Student housing is another key facilities driver, and it rated lower in the 2015 HEDS senior survey (see figure 5, page 10) than all other campus facilities and lower than peers at other institutions. There has been continuing attention to improvements, although not at the pace the College would like, due in part to acute, unforeseen capital needs that have arisen in the past two years with athletic facilities and an aging classroom building. The College will continue to renovate its residence halls, completing the core “quad” buildings in summer 2017 and remaining residential facilities thereafter. Over the past five years, the College has spent \$4.7 million on residence hall renovations and plans to spend another \$1.6 million in FY18. In addition, the College plans to continue to prioritize residence hall needs in future capital budgets. Each of these projects will have a profound impact on the campus and simultaneously make progress on the College’s most pressing deferred maintenance needs. Moreover, as noted above, in November 2016 the College announced a relationship with a third party developer that will construct 266 suite-style beds in the Rockland Plaza commercial center, directly adjacent to Roessner Hall; the facility is scheduled to open in fall 2017. The developer will own the new residence hall and the College will manage it. Beginning in fall 2017, Albright College will move to a four-year residency policy requiring students to live in campus housing and College-approved housing including the new Rockland Plaza Residence Hall. As plans began to evolve for the new residence hall, they were shared with the standing working group from the neighborhood with which the VP for Student Affairs meets regularly, consisting of the president of the College Heights Community Council, a number of community residents, and representation from the police department.

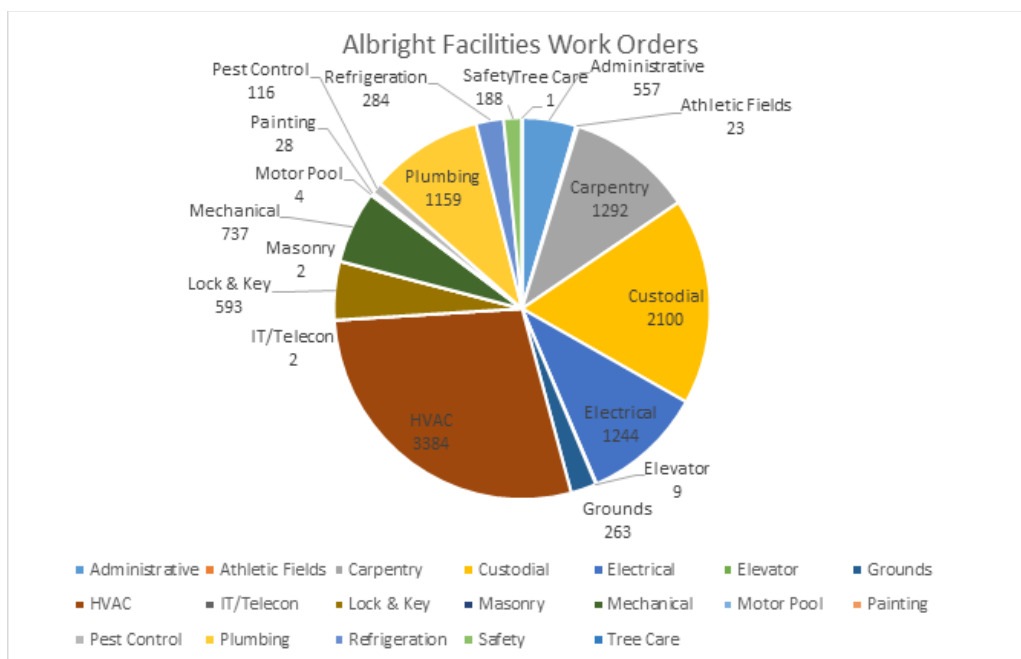
Regarding technology infrastructure, the AICUP survey of first-year students and HEDS survey of seniors show that our students are generally equally or more satisfied with campus technology than our comparison groups. For example, the 2013 AICUP First-Year survey showed 96% satisfaction

with computer labs (vs. 92% for peers); wireless internet, however, rated about 50% (vs. 54% for peers), and so considerable attention and resources were devoted to upgrading wireless, addressing total internet capacity (a second ISP internet feed and new internet routers, fall 2015), firewall throughput (new firewalls, spring 2016), and access points (added and repositioned, summer 2015 and January 2016). Albright also uses in-house surveys, committees, and other avenues to assess needs for both long-term and short-term IT planning. Information Technology Services (ITS) surveyed faculty to improve deployment of classroom technology, and the results informed planning that enabled the College to upgrade more classrooms with existing funds. ITS works with a 15-year plan for technology-related capital investments, which will help the College plan in advance of upgrades or infrastructure changes, such as a \$270,000 targeted investment in fiscal 2017 to replace end-of-life wireless access points and annual expenditures projected at \$300,000 or more for classroom technology.

Management of Albright's facilities services is contracted to Aramark. Regarding the physical plant, Aramark's Engineering Solutions Team provided a ten-year outlook on facility needs that includes deferred maintenance, modernization, and grandfathered items. This comprehensive Facility Condition Assessment (FCA) study identified a deferred need of around \$25 per gross square foot, which compares favorably with peer schools of similar age and size. The FCA has already proved useful in the capital planning and prioritization. We used the FCA analysis, for example, in replacing the cooling tower of MPK Chapel, upgrading the HVAC in our stadium fieldhouse, upgrading lighting in our gymnasium, and renovating one residence hall. The FCA also allows for further budget planning with regard to items such as domestic water heaters, window system replacement, painting needs, and many other building components. Additionally, in 2013-2014 the College conducted an Instructional Space Utilization Study, whose recommendations (discussed further in Chapter 5) will also be used along with the FCA to guide prioritization of future capital projects.

Operationally, Albright makes use of a maintenance management system, TMA, to better plan and budget for facilities-related work and Facilities personnel management. The availability and analysis of such data at the macro- and micro- levels are shown in the sample analysis of facilities work orders below:

Figure 2.1. Sample Maintenance Analysis (work order data January 2015 - March 2016)



Such analysis provides clear evidence to support budgetary decisions as well as planning for staffing and skill development. For example, Facilities’ analysis of this data led to the ongoing development of a multi-year capital replacement plan of air conditioning units in Mohn Hall, a residence hall. Such data analytics along with community feedback help the Facilities Department make informed, evidence-based decisions, a major goal when Albright developed its partnership with Aramark Facility Services in January of 2015.

The College’s current comprehensive campaign, That Their Light May Shine: The Campaign for Albright College, continues to be extremely successful. The campaign began on June 1, 2010, and officially launched in October, 2013 with \$31 million raised. The total goal for the campaign is \$55 million, and as of December 2016 total campaign commitments exceed \$54 million, with six months until the campaign’s completion date of May 31, 2017. This figure includes cash received of \$33.5 million from outright gifts, pledge payments, and realized bequests. Giving by leading college donors has been the key to the campaign’s success, and trustee support has been tremendous. Ninety-three current, emeritus and former trustees have personally contributed more than \$23 million, or 46% of the total raised, with the balance from other individuals, private foundations, organizations, and corporations. We have more than 11,000 individual donors, more than 3,000 of whom made their first gift to the College.



The campaign has already surpassed expectations in several ways, surpassing the goal for the College's annual fund by 141% and raising \$17.3 million for the College's endowment, exceeding this campaign priority by 20%. Such successes have already allowed creation of 21 new endowed scholarships and raising more than \$8.6 million for student support. There is still work to do in the area of support for capital projects. Although these efforts have led to the complete renovation of the new Roessner Hall (\$6.5 million), we still have work to do on two other large capital projects. One is a land purchase and construction of a new Track and Field facility. The other is an ambitious renovation and expansion of the Gingrich Library. Fundraising for the Library stands at \$5.6 million for a \$19 million project. While fundraising efforts will continue beyond the end of the campaign, senior leadership will need to determine the scope of the library project and length of continued fundraising efforts in the next year to 18 months.

### **Managing Expenses**

The College also seeks operational financial stability by careful and creative management of its expenses. During the five-year period from fiscal year 2011 to 2016, total operating expenses grew by only 6.0%, or 1.2% on average per year, which compares favorably with both the consumer price index (about 1.4%) and the higher education price index (about 2.0%).

This limited growth is primarily due to prudent financial management by budget managers throughout the College. In addition, compensation and interest expenses have declined slightly from retirements, benefits savings, and a recent debt refinancing. The College also implemented several important expense initiatives, many of which involve collaboration with other higher education institutions. For example, the College entered a self-insured health insurance consortium involving seven other Pennsylvania colleges and universities. This transition netted \$650,000 of savings in its first fiscal year, 2015, and provides longer-term stability in the College's health insurance renewals and stronger ability to improve its health claims experience through wellness measures. The College is also a member of a 12-institution purchasing consortium called the Lehigh Valley Association of Independent Colleges (LVAIC). This relationship allows access to group contracts negotiated at lower rates to purchase many different goods and services, from office supplies to medical waste disposal services. Along the same lines, the College purchases network hosting services along with nearby Alvernia University. Additionally, the College purchases property and casualty insurance through a 125+ institution consortium.

## **Managing, Preserving, and Building Resources**

The College has made strong progress towards long-term financial sustainability. Between fiscal year 2011 and 2016, the College's unrestricted net assets have grown by 53%, from \$34 million to \$52 million. Over the same time period, total net assets have grown by 29%, from \$92 million to \$118 million. Much of this increase has been driven by a highly successful comprehensive campaign, which recently crossed the \$54 million mark against a \$55 million goal. The increase in net assets is also driven by the strong performance of the endowment. The College has outperformed the NACUBO median for investment performance over the 3-year, 5-year, and 10-year horizons. In recognition of these returns, Albright College was named Small Nonprofit of the Year by *Foundation & Endowment Money Management* as part of the publication's 12th annual Foundation & Endowment Investment Awards. In addition, with regard to long-term financial sustainability, the College's debt levels have decreased by nearly 20%, or about \$8.2 million, from \$42 million in fiscal year 2011 to \$33.8 million in fiscal year 2016. This reduction is driven by recent refinancing of debt in 2013 and 2014, which also reduced interest expense between \$350,000 and \$450,000 annually.

The College continues to build on this progress with additional plans. The College introduced in 2014 a cash flow projection tool to forecast future cash inflows and outflows to allow for enhanced management of liquidity, and a cash enhancement plan has been developed to improve the College's cash balance by \$7 million over the next 10 years, to be funded through the planned development of unspent cash and deferred maintenance reserves within the College's capital budget. In addition, the College continues to strengthen its endowment management. For example, the Investment Subcommittee of the Board of Trustees implemented a comprehensive investment manager review policy to ensure investment partners are performing at optimal levels. Also, this Subcommittee added the Higher Education Price Index, or HEPI, to benchmark the College's endowment investment return, in addition to the Consumer Price Index.

The College recognizes that increasing revenue is a necessity. Developing new programs is critical to ensure the relevancy of the institution and for generating additional revenue. Several new academic programs have been implemented in recent years, as discussed in Chapter Seven. Our Camps & Conferences unit has increased the auxiliary revenue stream over the last few years. Specifically, Camps & Conference revenue increased 69% from FY2009 (\$377,000) to FY2016 (\$639,000). This has been driven largely by the influx of new athletic camps, including Hoop Group Elite, the nation's top exposure camp for amateur basketball players. A revised intensive English program will be a contributor to both campus diversity and revenue. The previous English as a Second Language program was suspended in 2011 over concerns about both enrollment and student success;

enrollments were down from a high of 40 in 2008-2009 to a low of 7 in 2010-2011, and ESL graduation rates lagged significantly behind those of domestic students. As part of the College's strategic priority of globalization, a new program was created in consultation with faculty and outside consultants. In fall 2016, Albright's new Access Albright program had its preliminary launch for direct-admit international students, a program that should grow and stimulate international recruitment. A non-credit Albright English Language Program (AELP) is expected to follow, targeting students of intermediate English having baccalaureate aspirations.

### **Institutional Controls and Independent External Review**

Many policies and procedures guide faculty and staff in administering the budget and protecting College assets. Existing policies provide significant internal controls, for example regarding approvals for financial transactions, contracts, and budget reporting. Continuous monitoring of the monthly budget reports is a basic and essential procedure; opportunities to detect and address variance from the budget plan are frequent, and readily accessible to various constituencies. Budget management was greatly enhanced through the implementation of Microsoft Dynamics' Management Reporter and SharePoint in 2015 after widespread negative feedback on the previous budget tool. This widely anticipated and well-received transition affords greater flexibility for working with data. Department budget managers and the President's Cabinet can interactively view detailed actual accounting flows, the corresponding budget plan, and any variances. Reports can now be exported into Excel, and preliminary reports are now automatically generated on a weekly basis compiling all processed transactions to date; previously only monthly access was available. This change required significant training for budget managers, which will be continued.

At a more "macro" level, internally prepared statements of activities are produced monthly once the fall semester has begun. These statements – which summarize by group the College's net revenues and expenses for the current and prior fiscal year-to-date periods, the corresponding twelve-month fiscal periods, and respective calculated run rates – provide similar opportunities for the reader to monitor adherence to the budget plan, as well as observe variations in revenue and spending from one year to the next. These statements, along with management-prepared variance explanations, are periodically reviewed by the President's Cabinet, Faculty Budget Committee, the Board of Trustees, and the College's banking partners. These internally prepared statements of activities were improved in 2014 by significant reformatting that now delineates separate net tuition revenue lines for each of three major educational programs (Traditional Day, Accelerated Degree, and Graduate), separates unrestricted and restricted revenues; and adds a second statement that stratifies operating expenses by natural classification in addition to the traditional, functional classification.

In addition to internal controls and oversight, Albright makes use of many independent, external reviews. Annually, the College’s consolidated financial statements are audited by an external accounting firm – currently Baker Tilly. Albright has always received an unqualified opinion. As part of the audit function, the firm also reviews and tests the underlying accounting controls. Albright has received a “no material weakness” letter throughout this accreditation cycle. Each year, in partnership with Baker Tilly, the College’s Finance team makes a presentation to the College’s Audit Committee at its September meeting; and again at the annual fall Board of Trustees meeting. In this presentation, the audited consolidated statements of activities are reconciled back to the internally prepared May financial statements, ensuring transparency. Additionally, the presentation highlights various key indicators, in terms of current and historical operations and comparing Albright to other private liberal arts institutions. Baker Tilly may provide informal recommendations for areas of focus; however, no observations have been made that warranted a Management Letter Comment. Other independent external reviews currently performed include the annual single audit, which expands beyond the financial statements with audited information about federal and state grant funding, the annual audit of the Institutional Assistance Grant program, independent accountant review of Forms 990 and 990T, the annual audit of the College’s 403(b) Retirement Plan, and periodic Information Technology reviews/audits, including recurring vulnerability testing. In addition, the College’s Financial Aid programs are subject to review by federal and state agencies. The Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) recently concluded a Program Review, which it conducts approximately every five years, with satisfactory results. Moreover, various grant funding agencies require program reviews. The College also submits compliance information, including internally certified calculations of required ratios for debt service coverage and liquidity, to our banking partners on a quarterly basis.

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Albright College has a strong mission and values that undergird its strategic planning. The College has made substantial progress toward the goals of its current strategic plan and looks forward to creating a new plan for the future based upon the current self-study process and the vision of the Albright community. Over the past ten years the College has realized a number of improvements that have strengthened the institution, among them more systematic, coordinated and aligned planning and budgeting (both short- and long-term); a campus master plan joined with improved facilities management that has helped fuel substantial improvements to technology and the physical plant; new academic and administrative review processes; and excellent management of expenses and endowment. Although the College continues to thrive, it recognizes the challenges and uncertainties

of its highly competitive and rapidly changing sector of higher education. The College must present its strengths well in attractive and effective ways through branding and marketing, and its website. However, unpredictable enrollments, high financial aid discounting, and chronic budget readjustments make clear that improvements to our financial operating model are not optional, and steps are already underway to further analyze and act on necessary improvements.

### **Recommendations**

1. Complete implementation of rebranding effort, including redesign of the College website and improved processes for editing and maintaining web pages (Standard 1)
2. Develop a sustainable operating model and financial plan that reduces tuition-dependence by increasing revenue, reducing expense, and assuring a modest, recurring operating margin within the budget. (Standard 2)
3. Working with the new President of the College, create a new strategic plan (Standard 2)
4. Now that all classes have entered under the new “meet need” financial aid strategy, further assess the value and viability of this practice and share findings with campus stakeholders (Standard 3)
5. Make further investments in residence hall renovations and improvements (Standard 3)
6. Pursue additional funding for library renovation, to include a new learning commons as a key site for improved teaching and learning (Standard 3)

### **Suggestions**

1. Define and implement a protocol for regular budget updates to the entire campus community to continue to improve communication and gain input
2. Enhance training of budget managers, especially new budget managers

## CHAPTER 3

### LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE, ADMINISTRATION, AND INTEGRITY

This chapter addresses *Characteristics of Excellence* Standards 4 (Leadership and Governance), 5 (Administration), and 6 (Integrity), and was first drafted by self-study working group number two, co-chaired by Albright's academic dean and a faculty member in Chemistry who has chaired both the Educational Policy Council and the Advisory Committee on Rank and Tenure. Here we demonstrate how Albright's ability to fulfill its educational mission is grounded in structures and practices that successfully meet Middle States standards for higher education leadership, governance, administration, and integrity, which in our view belong naturally together as topics for analysis at a primarily residential liberal arts college. The College meets these Standards and offers the recommendations and suggestions listed at the end of this chapter.

Albright operates under principles of shared governance congruent with best practices in American higher education and is committed, in the words of its Faculty Handbook, to “a commonly understood process of collegial governance that at once recognizes the primacy of Trustee authority to govern Albright College, the discretion delegated by Trustees to the senior officers of the Administration, and the expertise of the Faculty to judge the quality of Faculty performance in teaching, scholarship and service to the College and to oversee the curriculum of the College” (p.1).

The governance structure of the College and related authorities and responsibilities are primarily defined in four documents: (a) the Articles of Incorporation; (b) the Board of Trustees Bylaws; (c) the Faculty Governance and Policy Guide; and (d) the Student Government Association constitution. In addition, the Board of Trustees Handbook and Faculty Handbook each touch on governance, the first by defining Board committee structure, the second in Section II on “Division of Powers and Responsibilities.” With the exception of the Articles of Incorporation, these documents are available on the College website. As evidenced in the approved Compliance portion of the current Self-Study process, the Trustees and the administration certify to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education that the College is in compliance with the Commission's eligibility requirements, accreditation standards, and policies (including compliance related to Title IV). The College publicly represents itself as accredited as part of its consumer information on its website and as part of its on-line catalog.

## **Board of Trustees**

Albright College's Board of Trustees is accomplished in diverse fields and fully engaged with the College and its responsibilities; it operates using best practices and is committed to continuous improvement with guidance from the Association of Governing Boards and other professional associations. Candidates for trusteeship are evaluated by the board's Trusteeship and Governance Committee, which is charged with reviewing and reporting on the "diversity, influence, continuity, balance, professional, business, and civic talents" of the Board of Trustees. Improving board diversity is a challenging but ongoing goal. The Board actively recruits alumni (who are in the majority) and individuals with ties to the United Methodist Church and the greater Reading area, in furtherance of Albright's mission. The President of the College is the only employee of the College eligible for Board membership and serves as the Board's primary spokesperson (but cannot chair the Board). The current trustee membership includes expertise in accounting, management, finance, law, the ministry, health administration, and higher education. The trustees have a range of experience and qualifications that ensure the Board's ability to successfully meet its fiduciary, managerial, and academic responsibilities and ensures the College's ability to meet the needs of its own constituents and the public interest. Regarding fiduciary oversight in particular, there is considerable financial experience on the board, and in 2013 *Foundation & Endowment Money Management* magazine named the College Small Nonprofit of the Year. The bylaws require trustee commitment to annual giving and fundraising, and the trustees provide some of the College's largest financial support, as mentioned in Chapter Two above. Articles IX and X of the bylaws organize the Board into an Executive Committee and seven standing committees.

All Board members undergo an orientation at the beginning of their terms to receive information about the College's mission, organization, and academic programs to increase their readiness and effectiveness; the orientation includes, for example, sessions on the responsibilities of a trustee and the College's strategic issues, along with sessions with the College vice presidents, faculty chair, student leaders, associate provost, and director of the Accelerated Degree Programs (secure site access).

Beginning in 2013, the Board Chair and the President made a decision to expand the time for strategy discussions during regular Board meetings. To accommodate the change, all committees except Finance now meet within the two-week period before the Board meetings. This change has been well-received, and allows for more in-depth strategy discussions and interactive exchanges between trustees, faculty, administrators, and students.

The Board employs several forms of assessment. The Trusteeship and Governance Committee reviews the bylaws annually and makes recommendations for changes to the full Board; the most recent changes in October 2015 included a measure for trustee leaves of absence and one for electronic Board action without meeting. In addition, the Board of Trustees underwent formal self-assessment in 2006, 2012, and 2016 aided by an outside firm (secure site) and plans a similar process within a year or two of a new president taking office in 2017. Individual trustees undergo criminal background checks when they join the board and during their self-assessment at the end of their three-year term. In addition to individual self-assessment, each committee of the Board annually assesses its performance. Additionally, avoiding even the perception of conflict of interest is key to the integrity of the Board, and the standards regarding conflict for members are addressed in Article XI of the bylaws. Each year, trustees and officers of the college report any potential conflicts of interest to the President's Office and sign a standard statement that is delivered to the President and Board Chair and shared with the Trusteeship and Governance Committee. All Board members are expressly committed to its written Code of Conduct.

### **The Board and Shared Governance**

The Board works effectively with the President, administration, faculty, and students through established mechanisms to help the College fulfill its mission. The President, as specified in article IV.2 of the board bylaws, is the "College's chief executive officer and the chief advisor to and executive agent of the Board of Trustees." He is an active participant in all Board meetings, presents his goals and reports on their progress, and contributes actively to board planning and discussions. The Board evaluates the President annually (as do his direct reports, as part of the Board evaluation).

Governance structures ensure that the Board is engaged regularly with the College at large; faculty members and the vice presidents are present at meetings of each Board committee and the full Board to serve as advisors, and the Student Government Association is represented at meetings of the full board and of the Academic Affairs and Student Affairs committees. Both the Faculty Chair and the President report to the full faculty on motions from the Board meetings; the Faculty Chair reports to the full Board on faculty concerns; and the Faculty Chair and chair of the Educational Policy Council attend meetings of the Academic Affairs committee. The Board of Trustees has taken an active, engaged interest in all facets of the life of the College, and in a recent survey of faculty, over 80% of respondents agreed that the Board is not inappropriately involved in College operations.



## **Shared Governance: Administration, Faculty, and Students**

An effective structure is in place for facilitating the working relationship among students, faculty, and administration. The Student Government Association (SGA) functions as the primary intermediary between the student body and Albright College administration and faculty. Through this vehicle, the interests of students are adequately taken into consideration when decisions which affect them are being considered. SGA has four advisors: the Dean of Students, the Director of Student Involvement and Leadership, a faculty member, and the College President. In addition to attending meetings of the Board of Trustees, the SGA president attends meetings of the College Leadership Team (director-level and above staff). SGA members serve on several faculty governance committees for which the charge of the committee concerns students. These student representatives share one vote on such committees, although it is difficult to adequately populate faculty committees only with members of SGA because there are too few students to fill spaces allotted and time-conflicts. SGA is currently working with the Faculty Executive Committee to improve our approach to student representation on committees. To ensure student input into decisions that may affect them, some student organizations, including the SGA, hold regular meetings with the Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students, who has created an additional student advisory council with whom she meets regularly. In addition, the president of SGA meets monthly with the President.

As noted earlier, Albright's governing documents affirm the faculty's role in overseeing and maintaining Albright's quality as a liberal arts college through its oversight of curriculum and of faculty standards for performance. The faculty is organized into three academic divisions comprising twenty academic departments. The faculty's role in governance is carried out through a series of committees consisting of a Faculty Executive Committee (FEC) and three major councils, several reporting committees, and other standing committees. The functions of each are specified in the Faculty Governance Guide. The faculty meets once per month as an assembly during the academic year and follows an agenda determined by the FEC. Motions of importance, including those from the Educational Policy Council (curricular and policy issues) and the Professional Council (such as Faculty Handbook changes), are voted upon at the full faculty meetings. The Chair of the Faculty chairs the FEC, presides at faculty meetings, attends and reports at Board of Trustees meetings, meets regularly with both the President and Provost, and has a standing invitation to the meetings of the administrative College Leadership Team and of the Academic Affairs division staff. Each faculty committee includes an *ex officio*, non-voting administrator. The President and Provost attend faculty meetings, and each has a standing slot on the agenda (currently alternating by month). There is significant collaboration in matters of hiring, promotion, and curriculum. The Advisory Committee on Rank and Tenure and the Provost make a recommendation on tenure and promotion to the

President. The Board approves tenure and promotion. All full-time faculty hires are based on recommendations from the faculty to the Provost, with final approval from the President. The curriculum approval process requires that the academic department, Educational Policy Council, Provost, faculty, and Board of Trustees all approve new majors or combined majors and general education requirements, requiring collaboration and communication among all groups. Policies and processes in place regarding the academic program are both effective and actively reviewed, as evidenced in minutes of the faculty and relevant committees (General Education, Educational Policy, Curriculum Development). What is lacking, and would be helpful to governance transparency overall, is centralized, web-based access to committee minutes, a project underway and partially completed.

Overall, the faculty has been consistently engaged with review of governance and has monitored the processes that occur. The Professional Council (PC) is charged with conducting regular evaluations of the faculty governance structure. From 2009 to 2012, an extensive review of faculty roles was undertaken as part of a Sloan Foundation Grant for Faculty Flexibility, primarily through a faculty task force reporting to the Professional Council. The Faculty Executive Committee (FEC) also made limited recommendations on governance in response to a COACHE survey in 2013, which reaffirmed the Sloan Grant recommendations. The faculty did not formally implement these recommendations, but they remain an important resource for positive change. Recommendations related to governance included combining or removing some committees, as there is concern about overburdening the faculty. There has been a reduction in committee assignments over the Self-Study time period (albeit enforced more by culture than by policy). Led by the PC, the Faculty approved revisions in 2012 to the Faculty Governance Guide to more accurately reflect the functions and composition of each committee, since some committees' functions drifted over time.

On the whole, the College follows its faculty governance procedures, as evidenced by the minutes from meetings of the full faculty and its committees. However, the faculty and administration have acknowledged some cases in which processes require improvement. For example, a number of benefits had changed over the years, without faculty input or approval, due to external mandates and negotiations with insurance companies. In order to maintain an accurate Faculty Handbook, the faculty had to vote to accept these changes to the benefits section, after the fact. Such a situation suggests that changing this portion of the handbook needs to occur more frequently as needed and with better communication from financial administration. In addition, upon review of the faculty evaluation process, the Professional Council discovered small differences between the posted and approved versions. While the council deemed these changes to be non-substantive, they indicate a need for better document control for key policy documents.

Communication between the faculty and administration reflects good efforts on both sides, but opinions differ on the climate for shared governance at Albright. In both a COACHE survey in 2013 and a *Chronicle of Higher Education* Great Colleges to Work For survey in 2013, faculty and staff expressed dissatisfaction about the senior leadership and the relationship between administration, faculty, and staff. (Both surveys are on the SPIRA website.) Communication, collaboration, and support were the areas cited as needing improvement, and in response the FEC drafted recommendations, including regular opportunities for the faculty to evaluate administrators (which was not acted upon). The next iteration of the Great Colleges to Work For survey, in 2016, saw improvement in most areas. In particular, a significantly larger proportion of faculty provided positive responses to question items related to job satisfaction, teaching environment, shared governance, senior leadership, faculty-administration-staff relations, and communication (11 to 21 percentage point increases).

An internal survey of faculty in 2016 tried to drill down further on issues cited in the 2013 surveys. Faculty respondents felt most positively on the following: that the President and administration avoid overturning faculty decisions; that faculty members have opportunities to meet and evaluate candidates for major administrative positions; and that faculty members can express dissenting views on governance without reprisal. The faculty's role in budget discussions and the College's atmosphere for openness and trust were rated low. Two other issues drew conflicting results (that is, a large number of faculty both agreed and disagreed): whether or not the President and administration seek meaningful faculty input, and whether the President is an effective advocate for the principles of shared governance. Efforts at improved communication have been undertaken, for example by abolishing an ad hoc budget committee in lieu of having the CFO and Controller attend and present regularly at the standing Faculty Budget Committee and regularly present budget-related information at full faculty meetings. A faculty governance secretary was hired as a part of the Sloan Grant recommendations in 2013 to keep minutes for meetings of the full faculty, the Faculty Executive Committee, and the Professional Council and to archive minutes electronically.

### **Administrative Organization and Operations**

The administration of Albright College is currently headed by Dr. Lex O. McMillan III, whose role, as noted above, is defined in the Board of Trustees' bylaws as the "College's chief executive officer and the chief advisor to and executive agent of the Board of Trustees"; he has responsibility "for all College educational and managerial affairs." He is well qualified to be the College's chief executive; apart from his academic credentials (Ph.D., English, University of Notre Dame), Dr. McMillan has a

background in public relations and development which includes having been Vice President for College Relations at Gettysburg College. Dr. McMillan was appointed by the Board on May 2, 2005. Dr. McMillan has tendered his resignation effective May 31, 2017, the conclusion of the current comprehensive campaign. His successor has already been named, after a national search managed by a well-known search firm, and will start June 1. She is Dr. Jacquelyn S. Fetrow, immediate past provost at the University of Richmond. She is a talented higher education professional with significant experience as a faculty member, dean, and provost. She is also an Albright alumna and former trustee, which will further facilitate this important transition.

The President's senior administrative team (Cabinet) is well qualified to oversee all operational functions of the College. The administration is divided into five areas, each headed by a vice president: Academic Affairs (the Provost and Chief Academic Officer), Administrative and Financial Services (Chief Financial Officer), Advancement, Enrollment Management, and Student Affairs (Dean of Students). Organizational charts document the structure and organization of these areas. The *curriculum vitae* of the administrators provide evidence for their qualifications. The President holds weekly Cabinet meetings and presides over the College Leadership Team (CLT), which meets five times a year and consists of the Vice Presidents and their senior staff. Divisions and departments hold regular internal meetings. The committee system addressed above is an important part of College planning and operations. Administrative representation on faculty committees ensures administrative contribution to matters related to students and the academic mission, while campus-wide committees, such as the Assessment Committee and Institutional Review Board, involve the faculty in College-wide issues, as do continuing ad hoc committees such as the Globalization Steering Committee and President's Council on Diversity and Community.

The Vice Presidents submit goals for their division and reflect on its effectiveness at accomplishing the previous year's goals as part of the annual end-of-year report (available on the Strategic Planning, Institutional Research, and Assessment (SPIRA) intranet site). These goals align with the strategic plan, and this assessment process is linked to budgeting, as discussed in Chapter Two. A periodic review process was initiated in 2012 to better assess administrative areas, and the process is analogous to the longer standing Academic Program Review process (addressed elsewhere in this report). In these Administrative Area Program Reviews (AAPR), different areas undergo a self-study process on a five-to-seven-year cycle to assess key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis) and to develop an action plan, including resource needs; the appropriate Vice President reviews the self-study and plan. Items requiring additional financial resources are incorporated into the annual planning and budgeting process. Three areas have completed the process thus far—

Accelerated Degree Programs, Alumni Relations, and the Experiential Learning and Career Development Center (ELCDC action plan), and two others are substantially complete (Academic Learning Center and Writing Center). The College has taken steps to accelerate its efforts to complete the AAPR for all areas and establish the ongoing cycle as intended. The AAPR has been effective when seen through to completion and informs annual goal setting and budgeting.

Staffing is assessed along with annual goal-setting, and staffing decisions are based on these goals. Replacement or additional staffing is approved through a requisition process and incorporated in the budget; the appropriate Vice President, the Controller, the Director of Human Resources, and the President approve hiring lines. Staffing levels are periodically compared to those of other colleges using available information (e.g., data from IPEDS, CUPA, Council of Independent Colleges). Standard hiring practices such as interviewing and reference-checking ensure that administrators have appropriate background and skills, as evidenced in administrative *curriculum vitae*. Positions are posted nationally for searches for faculty and leadership positions (Vice Presidents and most director-level and above), and search committees for these positions include people both inside and outside of the unit to provide broader expertise and perspective. An affirmative action representative sits on all such searches. The searches for President, Provost, and Vice President for Enrollment Management all used a national executive search firm to assemble the best candidates and assure an effective process. To better meet the growing needs and demands of their positions, staff may apply for professional development opportunities up to \$500 per fiscal year through the Professional Development Program, and many administrative departments budget for professional development. In addition, employees can take undergraduate and graduate classes at Albright under our tuition-remission benefit. Faculty development resources are discussed in relation to Standard Ten.

Enterprise software such as those named in Table 3.1. below supports administrative work. The Information Technology Services department supports all such technology and process flow analysis. The College recently implemented Microsoft Office 365, which is used increasingly in collaboration across the campus, for example as part of the Middle States self-study process.

Table 3.1. Enterprise Administrative Software

<i>Administrative Function</i>	<i>Application</i>
Registration and Records, Student Billing	PowerCampus
Admission	PowerCampus and SLATE
Residence Life	Housing Director
Finance	Microsoft GreatPlains
Human Resources	Ceridian (HRIS systems currently under review)
Access Control and Point of Sales	Heartland OneCard
Career Services	Purple Briefcase
Development	Millennium
Course Management	Moodle

## **Integrity**

The stakeholders described above – trustees, administration, faculty, students – each have a vital interest in and responsibility for fostering a climate of integrity and individual respect on the Albright campus, which we do successfully as a campus community. Albright’s vision statement commits us to “honor, nurture, and celebrate human diversity in all its forms,” to “educate individuals of integrity,” and “to affirm that the search for knowledge should not be separated from the search for wise and just solutions in human affairs.” This vision places great value on academic and intellectual freedom, ethical practices, and mutual respect.

## **Students and Integrity**

Albright College maintains a culture that both cultivates integrity in its students and treats its students ethically and fairly in its processes. A transparent and consistent set of policies and protocols help shape students’ academic lives, with exceptions from stated academic requirements or regular policies requiring approval by faculty committees, the academic dean, or the Provost. (See, for example, catalog policies on academic forgiveness, course loads, academic standing and reinstatement, and graduation requirements.) Expectations of student honesty and integrity are made clear starting at orientation; the student handbook (*The Compass*) highlights academic and social responsibility as keys to our campus community, and academic integrity is also addressed in syllabi and in the college catalog. Plagiarism in particular is a topic in the required composition course in the general education curriculum.

Policies regarding violations of integrity, appeals, and grievances are discussed later in this Self-Study, in Chapter Five. Albright has clear appeal and grievance procedures for students accused of violations or who perceive inequity in a class or in their life on campus. For example, the process for appeals of grades or of charges of academic integrity violations is clearly stated in the catalog and relies on progressive levels of discussion up the “chain of command” to reach a resolution, including a joint

student-faculty appeals board if necessary. Other grievance policies address, for example, harassment and discrimination, including Title IX complaints\_(see *The Compass*). Both the traditional program and Accelerated Degree Programs offer a unified page for complaint resolution.

Appropriate committees routinely propose and approve changes to improve policies. For example, the Educational Policy Council reviewed and modified the academic dishonesty policy in 2011 (minutes, November 11) and 2016 (minutes, October 4) , and the grade appeal policy in 2013 (minutes, February 5). The office of the Dean of Students and Vice President of Student Affairs annually reviews the policies in *The Compass*.

Two campus ombudspersons serve as contacts for students, faculty, and staff with grievances, especially in cases for which someone feels that a concern is not being addressed; this function is advertised to students in *The Compass*. The College also has a “Campus Conduct Hotline” linked from the Human Resources home web page, which allows people to submit anonymously any observation of unethical or unsafe behavior. There is, in addition, a web-based form associated with the unified student complaint information pages described above.

The Office of Community Standards (OCS) manages student discipline. The process is primarily educative, but progressive; OCS is explicitly “grounded in the concepts of respect, civility, integrity, justice, and accountability to promote learning outcomes” to “ensure due process so that students can achieve their academic goals.” The published Code of Conduct described in the *Compass* provides for hearings, sanctions, and appeals and is applied consistently. Accelerated Degree Programs students are also held to these standards through the ADP Student Handbook (p. 40). The Director of Community Standards and the Vice President of Student Affairs/Dean of Students review these policies annually and as needed during the academic year to respond to concerns.

Access to reliable information on curriculum requirements and the availability of classes is important for students. The electronic College catalog is the comprehensive guide to Albright College’s curriculum for the traditional undergraduate program, Accelerated Degree Programs, and graduate program. Requirements are clearly stated there. The Registrar maintains catalog information with assistance from College Relations staff. As a resource for historical requirements, the Registrar archives each version of the catalog in PDF, which are maintained in network storage and available for reference in hard-copy by request through the Registrar’s office. This office publishes appropriate course schedules before each semester through email distribution, the registered student interface of the student information system (“Self Service”), and on the web. Required and elective courses are

sufficiently available to allow students in the traditional and graduate programs to graduate within the published program length, and the cohort model in the accelerated programs ensures that ADP students graduate on time. Albright's small size allows us to be relatively nimble in meeting student course needs, either by analyzing particular needs of majors in a department or, if necessary, offering independent studies or substitute courses, for example in very small majors. Because of state-mandated teaching certification requirements, education students sometimes complete their professional semester as a ninth semester, although a course plan for 8-semester completion is in place. Education students receive extensive and consistent advising, including the possibility of a ninth semester. The College implemented a new general education curriculum in 2013, and those requirements are widely available to both students and advisors.

### **The Faculty and Integrity**

In support of the College's mission, Albright hires and develops the careers of faculty members of high caliber in scholarship, service, and teaching. With exceptions noted below, these expectations are clearly stated in the Faculty Handbook, as are generally the policies for promotion and tenure (section IV), for grievances related to faculty employment, and for participatory governance. The promotion and tenure process is discussed in more detail elsewhere, in relation to Standard 10. Appeals of adverse decisions related to tenure and promotion are heard by a Faculty Appeals Committee consisting of five full-time tenured faculty members representing all academic divisions. (See Faculty Governance Guide section V.F for this committee and Faculty Handbook section V-VII for grievance procedures.)

The COACHE survey from 2012-13 inquired about faculty perceptions of tenure and promotion processes, and overall faculty members ranked "tenure policies" and "tenure clarity" similarly as our peers. However, promotion processes and criteria were an area of concern for associate professors in particular. This may indicate the need for conversation between the Professional Council and faculty of that rank to explore changes to the promotion process and/or better communication, which the Faculty Executive Committee has also recommended. The evaluation and promotion processes for non-tenure-track faculty are not as fully articulated as they should be. For example, the Faculty Handbook has a provision for instructors to be promoted to senior instructors, but provides no specific criteria for the promotion other than length of service. In addition, full-time faculty members evaluated in the traditional program are evaluated on scholarship, although the Handbook description for instructors does not reference scholarship expectations. Full-time, non-tenure-track faculty members who teach exclusively in the Accelerated Degree Programs do not receive evaluation on service.



Faculty compensation is reviewed annually, at which time the Provost addresses equity issues, within budgetary constraints. Evaluation of full-time faculty, both tenure-track and non-tenure-track, proceeds on a set calendar and follows policies articulated to the faculty through the Faculty Evaluation and Performance Compensation System guide. An ad hoc group under the auspices of the faculty Professional Council, which includes the Provost *ex officio*, is currently reviewing the faculty evaluation process, including merit pay, as it has not been reviewed in detail since the 2006-07 academic year and is the subject of widespread dissatisfaction.

Two aspects of faculty life of special importance are the College's culture of academic freedom and the integrity of the curriculum process. The Board of Trustees Handbook ("Code of Conduct") requires that Board members "accept the spirit of academic freedom and shared governance as fundamental characteristics of College governance." The opening section of the Faculty Handbook (I.A) affirms individual academic and artistic freedom as the foundation of our faculty community. The Faculty Governance Guide incorporates the AAUP Statement on Professional Ethics, which describes the ethical obligations of college professors as scholars, teachers, members of a college community, and participants of the community where they live. Both the Governance Guide and Faculty Handbook also affirm that sensitivity to, and respect for, others' opinions are a responsibility that goes along with academic freedom. There is occasional concern that communication on the faculty listserv does not live up to this responsibility, to the detriment of our climate of respect and general morale, when it is not understood to be a vehicle for official college business.

The Board and the administration also recognize the role of the faculty in curriculum development (for example, in the Preface to the Faculty Handbook). Processes for academic program review (APR) and curricular improvement are transparent, consistent, and function effectively through joint efforts of designated faculty committees (Educational Policy, Curriculum, and General Education) and academic administration. The APR process is jointly administered by the faculty Education Policy Council (EPC) and academic administration; it includes departmental self-study, external review, and an action plan reviewed by both the EPC and Provost. As noted earlier, the APR has resulted in curricular and facilities improvements and in thoughtful planning about departmental mission and staffing. As described earlier, no curricular change, including the elimination of programs, goes into effect without faculty approval. Two examples additionally show the role of collaboration in curriculum processes while being respectful of governance. One is the recent revision of general education, a seven-year process which began with the creation of an ad hoc faculty committee that reported to the Education Policy Council. After extensive research and discussion of current best practices, a proposal was debated by the full faculty over the course of many meetings and eventually

amended and approved. A new General Education Committee was then chartered as one of the EPC's standing reporting committees and charged with general education implementation and oversight; all revisions enacted to the general education plan by GEC during implementation were recorded and approved by EPC, with major changes brought to the full faculty for vote.

A second example is an ad hoc "academic program incubator" group that has met at least once per semester since 2012 to discuss and encourage new program ideas, in part to diversify the offerings of the College. This group has both facilitated programs already in the process of development by faculty and investigated potential new programs for the College. This group includes senior administration (Provost, dean, adult education director, and the Vice President of Enrollment Management) and senior faculty leadership (Faculty Chair and the chair of Educational Policy Council). Since its inception, new programs in urban affairs, public health, arts administration, and digital aspects of existing programs in art, communication, theater, and computer science were discussed and subsequently submitted through usual approval channels by the relevant academic department (through the Educational Policy Council, the faculty, and the Board of Trustees). Two program ideas discussed among this group were rejected, one by an academic department related to the program (health and wellness) and one by the EPC after being submitted by a sponsoring academic department (master's in arts administration). Arriving at an early shared understanding of curriculum, resources, and market potential often allows proposals to move forward more efficiently. Discussion by the "incubator" is not a required step in the curriculum-development process and does not guarantee its approval.

Two faculty-related areas have explicit conflict-of-interest policies. Conflict of interest is taken into account in grants processes by requiring a signed COI statement and is also part of the definitions and procedures for the Institutional Review Board (also included as Appendix C in the Faculty Handbook).

### **Administrative Staff and Integrity**

The employment policies for staff are included in the *Employee Handbook*, including those relating to types of appointment, hiring policies, affirmative action, and grievance procedures (section IV). The Handbook provides a statement of Albright's commitment to overall ethical workplace behavior and states a clear policy on conflict of interest for employees. A code of conduct and a procedure with progressive counseling for responses to misconduct are provided, as are performance evaluation and resignation policies and guidelines for setting salaries. Personnel decisions are made based on the policies in the Handbook and documented in personnel files when appropriate. The College's Director

of Human Resources monitors fair and impartial practices in the hiring, dismissal, evaluation, promotion, and discipline of employees and reviews the appropriate policies for fairness and consistency.

Performance of administrators and support staff is evaluated annually according to these policies. The evaluation instruments for administrators are framed in terms of the key objectives of the position. The supervisor provides comments and a development plan for the employee for improvement. The evaluation instruments for support staff are built around ten “general factors” which supervisors score and comment on. For all employees, the employee and the supervisor discuss and sign the evaluation form before processing, and the employee is given an opportunity to provide commentary on the form. The performance system is appropriate and effective because it outlines both the positive achievements and areas for development, and provides an opportunity to ensure employees’ work is aligned with college goals and strategic initiatives. In addition, employees may fill out a self-assessment questionnaire, which provides a vehicle for sharing their own perspectives on their position, how well they are doing, and whether they feel supported in their work.

Albright College uses satisfaction surveys and exit interviews described in the relevant handbook to gauge satisfaction regarding current practices and policies. One previously mentioned is the *Chronicle of Higher Education’s* Great Colleges to Work for Survey, administered in 2013 and 2016. The College’s Wellness Committee made recommendations in response to the 2013 results, and the President implemented some that had a positive impact on morale (for example, restoring holiday days between Christmas and New Year’s Day, establishing short summer Fridays, and adding a process for staff seeking professional development support). There is current discussion in that committee resulting from the 2016 CHE survey.

### **Overall Institutional Climate of Integrity and Respect**

In addition to the areas above, Albright demonstrates its climate of integrity and respect through its intellectual property policies and commitment to inclusion and diversity. An area of ethical practice that cuts across the entire campus community is approaches to intellectual property. The appropriate areas of the College take appropriate steps to meet copyright and intellectual property obligations, although we have yet to approve a comprehensive intellectual property policy. The faculty Professional Council (PC) has drafted such a policy, and with collaboration from administration and counsel, the final document will address the rights and responsibilities of faculty, students, and administrators in this arena. The expected timeline for completion is the end of the 2016-17 academic year. We expect to finalize this policy by December 2017.

The Library has a strict policy regarding the placing of materials on reserve and has a membership in the Copyright Clearance Center; librarians take the initiative in helping faculty members obtain proper clearance to assemble course packs and require students and others to sign an agreement to permit others to view private papers held by the Library. While there is no central copyright office on our campus, the Library keeps faculty and staff informed about legal issues regarding “fair use” of materials through its Copyright Information website. The Employee Handbook also addresses copyright (p. 20).

As the primary producer of publications on campus, the College Relations Office is cognizant of legal issues, copyright, fair use, ownership of materials, and appropriate attribution. Its staff advises departments and individuals and provides oversight for publications and marketing materials. In addition, the Vice President for Administration and Finance oversees all appropriate licenses for music used on campus.

The College belongs to the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Pennsylvania (AICUP) and follows all policies and regulations regarding software licensing. Information Technology Services (ITS) works to prevent illegal computer downloading in the residence halls. The College requires students to register personal computers and use College-provided anti-virus programs, which help to police student downloading. Terminals in the labs are independently monitored. The College prohibits CD burning in computer labs except for specific classes that require special administrative privileges for use. ITS maintains separate firewalls and environments between administrative and academic usage to preserve confidential records. All network users must sign an Acceptable Use Policy available on the ITS website. ITS periodically reviews its policies and consults with the faculty Information Development Committee, on which it is represented *ex officio*. Following the guidance of the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA), Albright College provides students with information on legal sources of entertainment media, provides a movie streaming service to students, has an Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources Policy that prohibits illegal download of copyrighted material, uses firewall rate limiting technology to manage P2P traffic and has an established procedure to work with Community Standards to process copyright holder notifications of infringement. The classroom recording policy, of particular relevance to Disability Services, addresses ethical use of faculty work in the classroom by students. Albright has only recently and in small measure begun teaching online courses, but there are policies for developing and implementing online courses, and they will need to be reviewed in light of the eventual institutional policy on intellectual property.

Inclusion and diversity are an immediate and tangible facet of a climate of respect and critical to the Albright College culture and experience. Albright embraces and celebrates different backgrounds, experience, and cultures, recognizing that the quality of community life is vital to achieving the institution's mission and vision. Our publicly stated values affirm that "we honor, nurture, and celebrate human diversity in all its forms and call into question whatever negates or endangers the dignity and worth of the human spirit." Currently in committee is a syllabus statement on the importance and support of diversity for faculty to use or adapt. Issues of human difference are embedded in different areas of the curriculum, and the College offers academic programs in Latin American studies, Africana studies, Asian studies, women's and gender studies, and religious studies. The general education Connections requirement includes an exploration of difference and global issues. We are fortunate to have students who represent 30 states and 14 countries, and more than 40% of our traditional undergraduates identify as a racial or ethnic minority (Fall 2016 Enrollment Statistics). The diversity of the Albright community enriches the classroom experience, provides opportunities for dialog about different backgrounds, ideas, and perspectives, and prepares students for the world.

Several initiatives on campus complement our commitment to diversity in the curriculum and in the student body. The Office of Multicultural Affairs, which strives to support and empower students of all backgrounds, provides educational and inclusive programming, advisement, and other services that promote cultural awareness. Its programs aim at creating a campus community characterized by openness, sensitivity, and a willingness and eagerness to learn about and value differences among individuals, groups, cultures, subcultures, and differing perspectives. Disability Services appropriately supports students needing accommodations, as described in Chapter Five. The International Student Office supports this particular group of students. A Gender Resource Center has operated sporadically with student leadership; Student Affairs recently decided to pull this activity under the Health Center umbrella to provide better resources and stability for supporting gender and sexual diversity. Several student groups focus on issues of diversity, including the African American Society, the African Diaspora, American Sign Language club, Caribbean Culture Club, the Gay-Straight Alliance, Hillel, Hong Kong Student Association, the International Students Association, the Language Exchange (French) Club, Logos Christian Fellowship, Muslim Student Association, Newman Catholic group, National Organization for Women, Tumbao Salsa Club, and the Xion Step Team.

In various surveys, student responses indicate strong engagement with diversity and difference, and Albright regularly outperforms peers on matters of diversity and inclusion. The majority of Albright

students believe they are well prepared to benefit from workplace diversity because of their Albright experience. (See the 2015 National Survey of Student Engagement (table 4), the 2015 Traditional Graduate Survey (figure 1B), and the 2015 Higher Education Data Sharing (HEDS) Senior Survey (table 4).) Our overall climate of respect is codified in policies and practices with respect to harassment and non-discrimination for all stakeholders, as expressed in the student handbook (*The Compass*, IV.D), catalog (“Harassment Policy”), Faculty Handbook (XIII.D), and Employee Handbook (IV and VI). Albright’s equal opportunity guidelines pertain to all constituents, from prospective students to employees, and are posted on the website, printed in all admission materials, and addressed in both the employee and faculty handbooks. The Board of Trustees formally reaffirmed these guidelines and their importance in 2012. Faculty and staff diversity, however, lags behind student levels and is difficult to improve, despite hiring guidelines for both faculty and administrative staff that open with a charge that “searches must be conducted in a manner that ensures equity while exhibiting a firm and aggressive commitment to improving diversity among our staff.”

Table 3.2. Albright Employee Diversity (% Minorities): Historical Survey Data

<b>Employee Type</b>	<b>FY2013</b>	<b>FY2014</b>	<b>FY2015</b>	<b>FY2016</b>
<i>Faculty – Traditional + ADP</i>				
Full-Time	12%	12%	14%	15%
Adjunct	6%	12%	7%	10%
<i>Admin/Staff</i>				
Admin	10%	11%	10%	11%
Staff	18%	22%	18%	19%

Although some progress is evident among full-time faculty – for FY2017, the percentage of minorities rose to 17.5% – this progress is painfully slow.

While members of the Albright community are expected to uphold these values, senior administration provides a venue for discussion of community and diversity. Developed in fall 2007, the President and senior staff created the President’s Council on Diversity and Community (PCDC), an advisory group comprised of faculty, staff, and students to bring a wide variety of perspectives to issues of diversity and the quality of community life at Albright. Chaired by the President, the PCDC meets at least three times each year to advise on and propose initiatives related to diversity. One such initiative is the annual “Campus Conversation,” which brings together faculty, students, and staff for discussion on topics such as race, spirituality, citizenship, gender and sexual identity, courage, and immigration. Additional programming occurs through academic departments, the Center for the Arts, and Student Affairs, including events that provide an opportunity to earn credit toward the Experience Event

requirement, although these efforts are not systematic. The 2016 faculty retreat included a diversity workshop by outside consultants. Overall there is a level of dissatisfaction with the unrepresentative profile of faculty and administration, and an expressed commitment to finding a way forward on this issue.

### **Institutional Integrity with the Public**

Albright's College Relations and Marketing Office is a full-service communications agency that manages the marketing, public relations, media relations, publications, social media, web, and photography needs of the College. With the help of its many campus partners, College Relations and Marketing is a centralized publications outlet responsible for ensuring that the information shared with Albright's publics via print, broadcast, and online communications is vetted for accuracy. When issuing a news release, College Relations works with the faculty or staff members involved to ensure information is correct. The College Relations and Marketing Office reviews materials and edits and proofreads all copy submitted to it for factual errors. Materials are sent to departments to review before print to ensure accuracy, and are proofread a second time by College Relations staff prior to printing or publishing online.

College Relations also ensures the accuracy of facts in the main institutional and recruitment publications, including *The Albright Reporter* and *albright! The Magazine for Prospective Students*. The Admission Office meets with administrative and academic departments on a regular basis, using department chairs and academic administrators as a resource for current, accurate information about academic programming and annually reviews and updates data used in Admission publications.

While the College Relations and Marketing Office has no specific written policy regarding ethical practice, all staff are members of the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), a professional association serving educational institutions and the advancement professionals who work on their behalf in alumni relations, communications, development, marketing, and allied areas. Members of CASE are bound to the Principles of Practice for Communication and Marketing Professionals at Educational Institutions, a supplement to the CASE Statement of Ethics adopted in 1982. Similarly, the Office of Admissions adheres to a Statement of Principles of Good Practice put forward by the National Association of College Admissions Counselors (NACAC), and our institutional research staff adheres to the Code of Ethics and Professional Practice of the Association for Institutional Research. These three offices are the primary providers and communicators of information about the College to the public.

The College publishes and makes easily available all core documents for students, prospective students, the campus community, alumni, and the public. The College's website is a primary source of information, and the College proactively publishes key College documents and reports to the internet, including the student handbook (*The Compass*), the College Catalog, the Honor Roll of Donors, *The Albright Reporter*, institutional data of student and public interest, extensive calendars, directions, admission materials and applications, a list of all social media networks to which Albright College departments and organizations belong, and resources for the community. Students accessing *The Compass* and the College Catalog online have the option to print hard copies, and requests for hard copies can also be made to the Office of Student Affairs and the Registrar's Office, respectively. Information regarding admission, financial aid, and academics is available both in print and online or linked from the College website. A "Consumer Information" page contains various information, including graduation and retention rates, and makes use of "UCAN," the University and College Accountability Network, to convey some information of interest to prospective students and the public; it is accessible directly from the bottom of the home page.

News releases can also be found on the Albright College website, with current releases on the home page and archived releases linked from there. (Hard copies are kept in a binder in the College Relations and Marketing Office and sent to the College archives.) State of the College reports, presented by President McMillan to the campus community each August, are also available online.

Public information about the College's Middle States accreditation status is also available on the website, linked to the consumer information page. Albright's successful 2012 Periodic Review Report was publicized widely internally and through a press release, and its executive summary remains available publicly on the website, linked from the "About" tab. The current Middle States Self-Study process has its own link on the College homepage. The Director of Institutional Research prepares and submits annually the MSCHE Institutional Profile to document institutional data and changes. Significant changes are submitted to the Commission as required, such as the 2015 substantive change request for relocation of our Harrisburg, PA, site and previous closure of a Mesa, AZ, instructional site. Accreditation-relevant news is communicated internally through the employee newsletter (*The Lowdown*), the Albright e-mail list for all employees, in press releases, and in other contexts. Internal documents are available to the College community on the Strategic Planning, Institutional Research, and Assessment (SPIRA) website.



### **Assessment of Policies Related to Integrity**

Policies and procedures related to integrity are periodically reviewed, some more systematically than others. Some of these review processes are mentioned above, such as the review of the *Compass*, the student handbook, curricular changes, and intellectual property. Governance documents are reviewed through regular governance processes. The Professional Council reviews the Faculty Governance Guide and the Faculty Handbook periodically, although not as frequently as the three-year cycle stipulated in the Governance Guide, which has not proved practical. Changes to these documents can be made at any time and are initiated by or flow through the faculty Professional Council. Changes to the Faculty Handbook also requires approval by the Board of Trustees (normally considered at the October Board meeting). The Trusteeship and Governance Committee reviews the Board of Trustee bylaws and recommends any changes to the full board annually (p. 13).

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Albright College operates under a well-established and effective system of governance that extends from the Board of Trustees through the administration, faculty, and students. The governing Board is both qualified and highly engaged, and the senior administration is well-credentialed and experienced. There is a strong process for review of the Board but the administrative area review process does need to improve. A robust committee structure ensures both that the work of the College gets done successfully and that different stakeholders are involved. Students have good access to governance processes, and faculty and administration collaborate routinely in shared governance through committees and other forums. Academic freedom and faculty oversight of curriculum are foundational to the Albright culture. Even so, communication between faculty and administration, and faculty inclusion in decision-making, especially around budget issues, should improve, and steps have been taken already around transparency and financial planning. A culture of inclusivity and respect is highly prized at Albright, and safeguarding such a culture is an ongoing commitment. Students consistently report the great value of this diversity, much more than at peer institutions. To improve further, recruitment of more diverse faculty and staff is necessary. Policies for students, faculty, and staff concerning due process, equity, and integrity are clearly stated and followed. As noted above, a campus-wide intellectual property policy is still in development but should be completed this calendar year.

## **Recommendations**

1. Strengthen periodic review of administrative areas, ensuring timely completion and useful results (Standard 5)
2. Complete an effective intellectual property policy that serves the entire campus (Standard 6)
3. Design and implement a plan to increase faculty and staff diversity (Standard 6)

## **Suggestions**

1. Provide centralized web access to committee minutes, maintain accurate committee lists, and make these readily available
2. Undertake campus conversations on the meaning and exercise of transparency and shared governance at Albright
3. Develop a means, such as “360” reviews, for broader community input into performance assessment, especially that of senior administrators
4. Improve storage, access, and maintenance of official policies, both faculty and administrative

## CHAPTER 4

### ASSESSING INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND STUDENT LEARNING

This chapter addresses *Characteristics of Excellence* Standards 7 (Institutional Assessment) and 14 (Assessment of Student Learning) and was first drafted by self-study working group number three, co-chaired by the chair of Physics, who also chairs the College's Assessment Committee, and the Associate Dean of Students and Director of the Gable Health and Counseling Center, who is also a member of the Assessment Committee and co-chair of the college-wide Wellness Committee. The College meets these Standards and offers the recommendations and suggestions listed at the end of this chapter.

#### **Introduction**

Since the last Self-Study report in 2006, Albright College has made significant and important progress in the assessment of institutional effectiveness (Standard 7) and student learning (Standard 14). As a result of the Self-Study, combined with recommendations by the Middle States evaluation team and Commission, the College focused on developing and implementing a comprehensive assessment plan with emphasis on tying together assessment of student learning and institutional assessment. Led by the Assessment Committee, an organized and sustained process to assess institutional effectiveness and student learning outcomes was set in motion and firmly in place by 2011.

In 2012 the Periodic Review Report (PRR) presented evidence that Albright had (in the Commission's words) "fully responded" to all Middle States and College recommendations related to assessment, prompting the Commission to commend Albright for "progress made." Since the completion of the PRR in 2012, Albright has continued to make progress in all areas of assessment. Faculty and staff are regularly engaged in assessment and use results to improve student learning, gauge achievement of strategic and operating goals, and improve efficiency and effectiveness of the College's operations. As such, more recent work has focused on strengthening, refining, and extending College assessment practices. Among the progress made has been the implementation of an Administrative Area Periodic Review (AAPR) process as a companion to the long-standing Academic Program Review (APR). Several units have completed the AAPR and most others are currently in process. In addition, assessment of the general education curriculum is moving ahead, as is assessment of the Accelerated Degree Programs. The culture of assessment has firmly taken root across the College and continues to grow.

## **Institutional Assessment**

Institutional effectiveness at Albright is anchored by the mission and goals of the College and integrated with the strategic plan, “Charting a Course for the 2020 Graduate and Beyond.” The College assessment plan (“Assessment Processes and Plans at Albright College,” approved October 2011 with later revisions) provides a comprehensive and systematic approach through which to view, plan, and perform assessment of institutional effectiveness. The assessment approach employs a continuous cycle of planning goals, allocating resources, implementing strategies, assessing outcomes, and using results at all levels of the College.

At the institutional level, assessment of the strategic plan is operationalized through an annual cycle of goal setting, budgeting, and assessment, linked to the strategic plan. Results are used to inform stakeholders on the extent to which the College is meeting its mission and strategic goals, including student learning goals, future plans, and improvements. Results of the process are captured annually across the institution through an end-of-year Report and disseminated as discussed in Chapter 2. End-of-year department reports are prepared and compiled with summaries for each division. Highlights of these reports are shared each August in the President’s State of the College address. Under the current strategic plan, five cycles of planning and assessment are complete and available to internal stakeholders on SPIRA through the Annual Reports and Goals section. Use of national and regional surveys also informs assessment of institutional effectiveness and student learning. They include, but are not limited to, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), the Cooperative Institutional Research Program’s (CIRP) Freshman Survey, Annual Graduate Survey, and several others. Usual institutional surveys, their upcoming schedule, and reports on results are presented in the IR section of the SPIRA website. Results of these surveys are reviewed by the President’s Cabinet, the Assessment Committee, and faculty governance representatives. Summaries are often presented to the Board of Trustees, the College Leadership Team, and the faculty, and at public forums, and are posted on SPIRA for all internal stakeholders to review.

Institutional assessment at Albright relies upon the collective contributions of each division and respective departments to realize the mission and strategic goals of the College. This approach allows each department to establish and use appropriate and meaningful measures within its area to inform goal achievement and improvement. The Board, as well, understands the importance of assessment in driving strategic objectives, and at each of its meetings the Board reviews the Key Strategic Indicators and Dashboard, which is aligned with the three overarching Strategic Plan priorities, and dedicates time at each meeting to discussion of strategic topics, for example, retention, branding, financial aid strategies, enrollment marketing, and the master plan. A comparison of the dashboard

statistics summary in each of the three strategic priorities – Foster Academic Excellence, Strengthen Our Learning Community, and Increase Development and Stewardship of Resources – reveals more work to be done to achieve goal levels in comparison to peer groups, but Albright has made progress in achieving improvements in over 85% of measures since 2012 across the strategic spectrum. Notably, 100% of the measures aligned with the goal to Increase Development and Stewardship of Resources have shown improvement since 2012.

### **Assessment Committee**

The primary responsibility for overseeing the design, implementation, and monitoring of assessment at Albright College belongs to the Assessment Committee, a college-wide committee with representation from all academic and administrative divisions and with the Provost, Director of Institutional Research, and Assessment Coordinator serving *ex officio*, as described in the document “Assessment Committee Mission, Responsibilities, Membership and Terms of Office.” The committee meets monthly during the academic year and establishes goals that support core “priorities for improvement.” Goal progress is evaluated and documented each May. Since 2012, the Assessment Committee on average has achieved 73% of goals according to the Assessment Committee Goal Summary. All committee activities (goals, agendas, and minutes) are available on SPIRA. The Assessment Committee’s four core charges are:

1. Promote a culture of assessment at Albright
2. Organize assessment processes at Albright
  - a) through alignment
  - b) through practice
3. Maintain databases and assessment resources at Albright
4. Communicate assessment efforts within and outside the College

It should be noted that these core activities themselves align with the Fundamental Elements of Standards 7 and 14, which emphasize both horizontal and vertical alignment of goals across the institution (see item #2a above); documented (#3), organized (#2b), and sustained (#1) assessment practices; and the sharing and use of assessment results (#4) for continual improvement. Because the goals and activities of the Assessment Committee follow the core components, these components will be used to organize the remainder of the chapter.

### **Culture of Assessment**

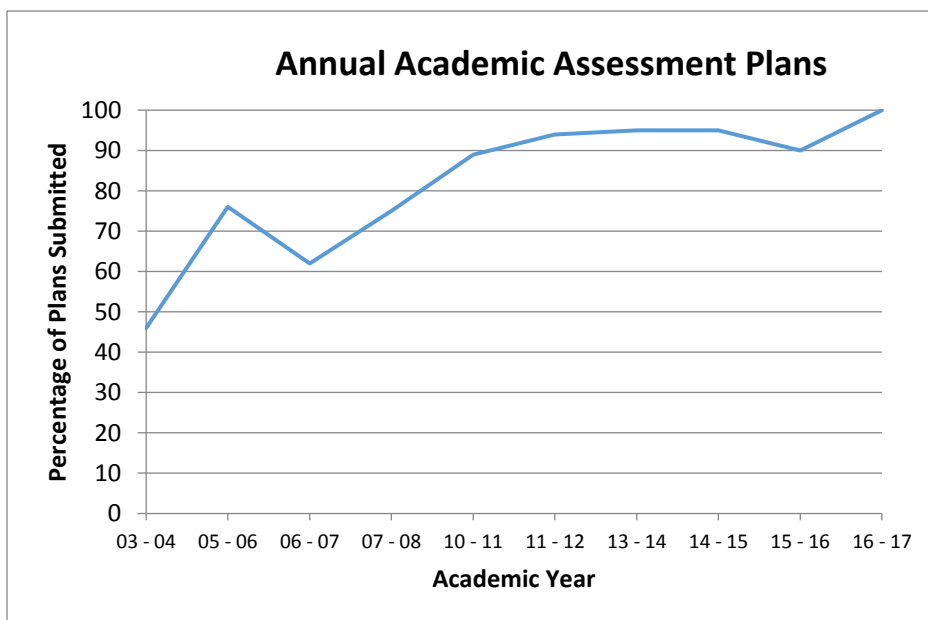
A culture of assessment is one in which assessment practices grow and develop on their own, becoming an organic, natural, and self-sustaining part of the institution’s professional activity. When

a culture is established, faculty, administrators, staff, and students all see the value in assessment and seek to incorporate it regularly into their activities. Evidence for such a culture consists mainly of continued progress toward universal application of the assessment cycle and use of assessment results (“closing of the loop”).

The last PRR described the strong momentum of Albright’s growing culture of assessment. The primary impetus for this growth came from the administrative linking of the planning, budgeting, and assessment cycle (see PRR, pp. 14-18). The essential pieces of this process are the assessment plans and corresponding budgets submitted near the end of the calendar year (see planning, assessment and budget timeline) and the end-of-year (EOY) reports submitted at the end of the fiscal and academic year, discussed also in Chapter 2.

The assessment plans and EOY reports provide multiple lines of evidence that the process has been improving substantially over time and that a culture of assessment is fully established at the College. Assessment plans have gone from being common to being universal among academic departments. The transition from common to universal submission of annual assessment plans is shown in Figure 4.1. About two-thirds of departments had plans at Albright’s last decennial review. The percentage increased steadily up to the time of the PRR and then has stayed high and gradually increased since that time.

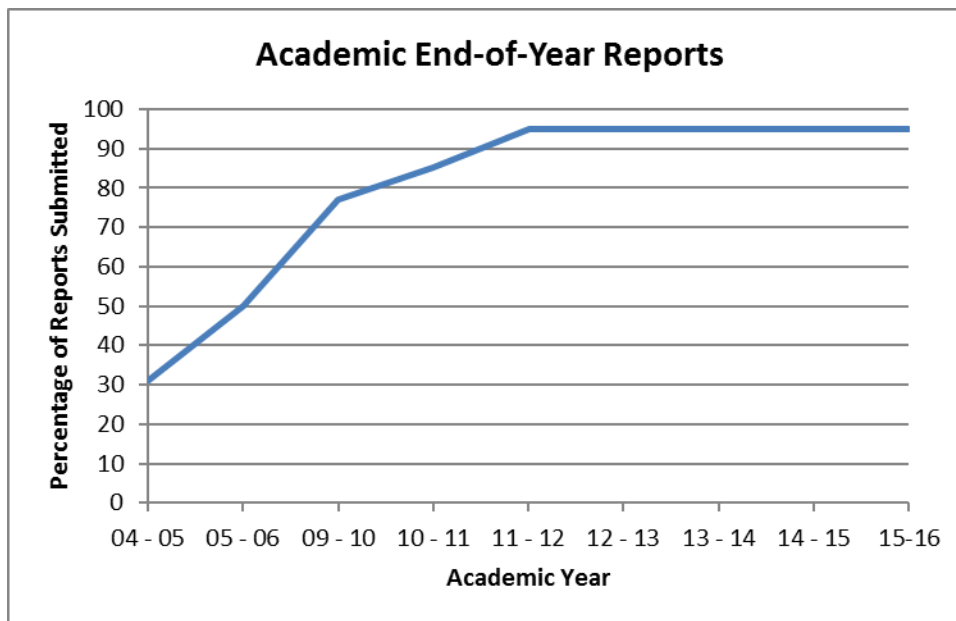
Figure 4.1. Faculty Submission of Annual Academic Department



## Assessment Plans

A similar transition is seen in the percentage of EOY reports and assessment results submitted, as shown in Figure 4.2. The percentage of academic departments submitting reports increased from about half at the time of the decennial review to being nearly universal by the time of the PRR. Participation has continued at the same high level since that time. The reason that the percentage has not yet reached 100% is due to a single academic department at Albright that had operated for some time without a department chairperson. The observed consistency in the submission of EOY reports indicates that a sustainable culture of assessment was fully established by 2012.

Figure 4.2. Academic Departments Submitting Annual EOY Assessment Reports



In 2015, the Assessment Committee devised an End-of-Year rubric to evaluate the quality of report submissions. The purpose of the review was to assist the committee to identify candidates for an award for exemplary assessment, ascertain strengths and improvement opportunities to inform best practices and training needs, and provide mechanisms for departmental feedback. The Assessment Committee piloted the rubric in 2016, applying it against 52 end-of-year reports completed during the 2015 planning and assessment cycle. In all, nearly 60% of the reports scored in the exemplary or satisfactory range. Findings and actions for improvement are summarized below.

Table 4.1. Summary Findings of EOY Assessment Report Rubric

	<b>Academic and Admin EOY Reports</b>	<b>Summary Observations and Actions for Improvement</b>
Exemplary	26.9% (14)	Demonstrate effective closing the loop assessment practices. Communicate and share exemplary criteria.
Satisfactory	32.7% (17)	Use of EOY templates appears to assist departments. Review and update templates; provide training.
Developing	34.6% (18)	Missing report elements, limited presence of data results and success criteria. Devise training.
Beginning	5.8% (3)	Lack of clear goals resulted in low scores across rubric criteria. Contact departments to provide personalized guidance.

### **Organizing Academic Assessment Alignment and Practices**

In contributing to the development of students at Albright, the College takes seriously the importance of developing goals and student learning outcomes in both academic and administrative areas. Albright has organized its assessment processes to achieve alignment of goals and outcomes across the College at all levels. On the academic side, the annual assessment plans follow a template that asks each department to explicitly connect yearly departmental goals and student learning outcomes (SLOs) with the goals of the College’s strategic plan (see assessment plan template, available in SPIRA). Progress in achieving these goals and assessment results for the SLOs are reported annually in the EOY reports. These results are then used to finalize goals for the coming year and to develop new goals for the planning-budgeting-assessment cycle. Sample reports from English, Political Science, and Religious Studies exemplify this work and its utility for improving student learning. They show each department focusing on a limited number of goals, analyzing results, and considering actions to be taken in response. Departments focus on traditional day majors in their EOY reports, since according to a policy established in Fall 2011, Accelerated Degree Program majors are reviewed with the affiliated department in the periodic Academic Program Review process. No departments with ADP majors have been reviewed since this policy went into effect, which suggests that APR is insufficient as a sole assessment vehicle, and that in addition ADP majors should be included in the annual assessments done by relevant academic departments for the EOY process.

To ensure that departmental goals and SLOs are represented in student coursework, faculty are required to include course-level SLOs on their syllabi and to submit the syllabi to Academic Affairs. Inclusion of SLOs, a “4<sup>th</sup> hour of quality” statement when relevant, academic honesty expectations, and other student support information on the syllabi are checked periodically as part of annual faculty performance reviews and the periodic department review. A method to encourage SLO alignment is curriculum mapping, which evolved as a result of the assessment process. This began in 2010 – 2011,



when a curriculum map template was created, and two departments, Physics and Biology, applied it to their curricula (see sample program curriculum map, available through SPIRA). Both departments identified significant gaps in their curricula with regard to coverage of departmental SLOs and were given assessment awards for their work (see assessment award citations). As a result, curriculum maps were made a priority by the Provost, and the majority of departments have completed a curriculum map. Satisfactory curriculum maps demonstrate that, in the department's opinion, courses are well aligned with departmental SLOs.

To test the adequacy of the current process at aligning course-level SLOs to departmental and College-wide goals, the working group for Standards 7 and 14 surveyed a sample of 398 out of 596 syllabi from those submitted to the Office of Academic Affairs for fall 2015 and spring 2016, choosing syllabi at different levels and from as many different instructors as possible. Syllabi were checked for the presence of multiple SLOs that were clearly worded and "actionable." Of those syllabi, 79% have multiple SLOs, 73% have at least some clearly worded SLOs, and 76% have some that are actionable or measurable. It was especially noted that in some cases, faculty members stated what they intended to *teach* (course goal) but not what the students would be learning how to *do* (SLO). The survey makes clear that while alignment at the course level is widespread, it would be useful to provide opportunities and resources for faculty training on the difference between course goals and learning objectives, especially in terms of goals that are measurable or actionable.

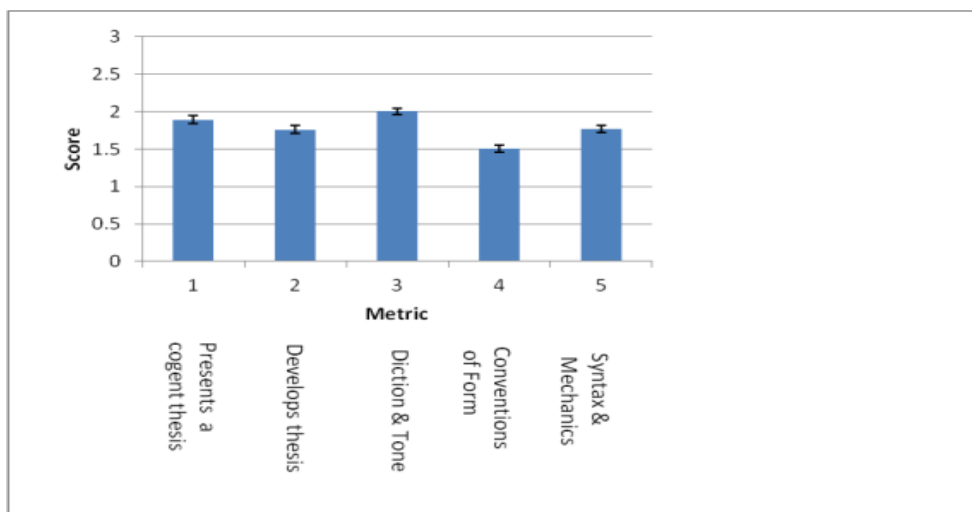
Assessment of General Education. The revision and renewal of general education is a major curricular initiative by the faculty that has been ongoing since Albright's previous re-accreditation. The new curriculum was fully implemented in the traditional day program in fall 2013 and not until June 2016 for students in ADP, after significant planning in that program and coordination with its community college partners. The first cohort under the full new plan in the traditional program will graduate in spring 2017; hence there is limited data on its progress. Assessment is the charge of the General Education Committee in consultation with the Assessment Committee; the GEC was formed in 2012 as a new committee under the Educational Policy Council. GEC began implementing an assessment plan in 2014-2015, and there are also institutional surveys such as the Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium (HEDS), Senior Survey and the National Student Survey on Engagement (NSSE) that are administered regularly and provide data relevant to the achievement of general education outcomes.

All general education courses specify learning objectives in the syllabus that have been approved by the Curriculum Development Committee. The GEC began in 2014 by targeting key competencies for

incoming students, namely written communication and information literacy. The 2014 assessment targets set by GEC were goals related to information literacy and written communication. Results are described in the General Education Assessment Report, June 2015. The information literacy goal was based on the ACRL's *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education*. The plan for assessing information literacy at the first-year level was to administer a pre-test from the Information Literacy Course Module developed by CREDO, an information skills firm that serves educational institutions. The pre-test was administered through Moodle on an optional basis to all incoming first-year students in August 2014, with approximately 40% (216 students) completing the assessment. The 2014 results showed a median score of 64, and mean of 61.9. With almost 72% of students scoring under 70, it was evident that the average incoming first-year student has only a beginning level of competence, as expected. The first-year pretest was repeated with incoming students in fall 2016 with a much lower response (97 students), but with similar results (69% below 70). Improving information literacy assessment will be an important part of improving our general education assessment.

The second portion of this initial assessment was a faculty analysis of written artifacts from randomly selected students completing their first-year seminar, using a rubric adapted from several sources. Because the rubric in part asked about information literacy skills, this portfolio analysis was seen as a complement to the IL pre-test assessment, not only to assess progress made by incoming students in their first year but also as a window on whether any strengths identified in the pre-test were also evident as being applied by students in their actual writing. The rubric was used with approximately 100 anonymous essays from First-Year Seminar sections; after an initial norming session, each was scored by two readers. The rubric and results can be found in appendices V-VIII in the GEC July report. On a 1-3 scale (did not meet, met, exceeded expectations), the mean composite score was 1.79.

Figure 4.3. General Education Writing Assessment (average student score per metric)



Most of the products clustered just below or at the “meets expectations” score, indicating that Albright first-year students have room for improvement but are not seriously deficient. However, more than half the students were seriously deficient in the area dealing with “conventions of form,” which includes the ability to use and cite sources correctly, an aspect of written communication and information literacy addressed more fully in later general education courses. Clearly their first semester did not significantly improve their performance in this area, suggesting a need for more formal expectations in the First-Year Seminar, which is on the agenda for the GEC in the current semester.

It is necessary to implement follow-up assessment later in the general education program for the written communication and information literacy skills that were targeted at the beginning, in order to draw longitudinal conclusions that enable us to better “close the loop.” The site planned for these post-test assessments is the general education capstone, the “Synthesis” course, and will include at minimum re-administration of the CREDO test to students completing the general education curriculum.

In 2015-2016, the General Education Committee piloted assessment of the Foundations portion of the general education curriculum, whose goal is to introduce students to the five foundational “ways of knowing” embodied in the sciences, humanities, arts, quantitative studies, and social sciences. The intent was both to evaluate the extent to which Foundations goals were being met and to discover what methods of assessment the faculty are using across the disciplines at this early point in the life of the new general education program. GEC invited participation from professors in each of the five Foundations areas, soliciting data on student performance on assessments tied to Foundations goals. Response was disappointing, accounting for 104 students in seven courses. While some positives were clear – some courses had course objectives closely aligned with Foundations goals and used assignments and assessment tailored to address course goals – the process yielded clear negatives as well. Some course goals lacked specific connection to Foundations goals and some instructors had trouble separating course-level from program-level aims and assessments. Results are summarized in the 2016 GEC report on the pilot Foundations assessment. Next steps underway with regard to Foundations courses include:

- Codify and communicate a shared understanding within each academic division of the “way of knowing” that students in that division’s Foundations courses should be explicitly learning. In Fall 2016 GEC convened divisional meetings to gain both clarity and agreement on each division’s foundational goals. Results are being compiled and will be disseminated to faculty for comment so that by the end of spring 2017, GEC can present the foundational goals to

the full faculty along with several example signature assignments for Foundations classes to guide faculty practice.

- Communicate more broadly, and more often, best practices for Foundations goal-setting and assessment, including articulating these goals more clearly in syllabi and providing a mechanism for follow-up review of syllabi for this purpose.
- Implement a supplementary assessment of Foundations courses in 2016-2017 to improve upon the 2015-2016 data collection; this is currently underway.

GEC's primary assessment target for 2016-2017 is the next tier of the curriculum, "Connections" courses. Then, during 2017-2018, the foreign language requirement will be assessed in collaboration with the departments of Modern Foreign Languages and Literatures and of Classical Languages. It is fair to say that initial assessments of general education, especially in the case of Foundations, have taught us as much about faculty-wide assessment practices as about student learning, and this has been a valuable lesson – for example, trouble aligning course goals with program goals and developing "signature" assignments.

Missing from the GEC's assessment activity to date is inclusion of the general education courses in the accelerated program. As noted above, the new curriculum was not fully implemented in ADP until June 2016. In late 2011 the Educational Policy Council voted, in light of the creation of a new Administrative Area Periodic Review process, that ADP should be reviewed under that process as an administrative unit but that its curriculum would be reviewed under faculty processes, the major courses under the affiliated academic department's Academic Program Review (APR) and the general education courses by the GEC as part of its assessment plan for general education. GEC has begun including ADP courses now that the new requirements are in force. Almost all courses are the same ones taught in the traditional program, but there are a few exceptions, and the accelerated format differs. The GEC assessment plan has been revised to be more explicit about including ADP courses.

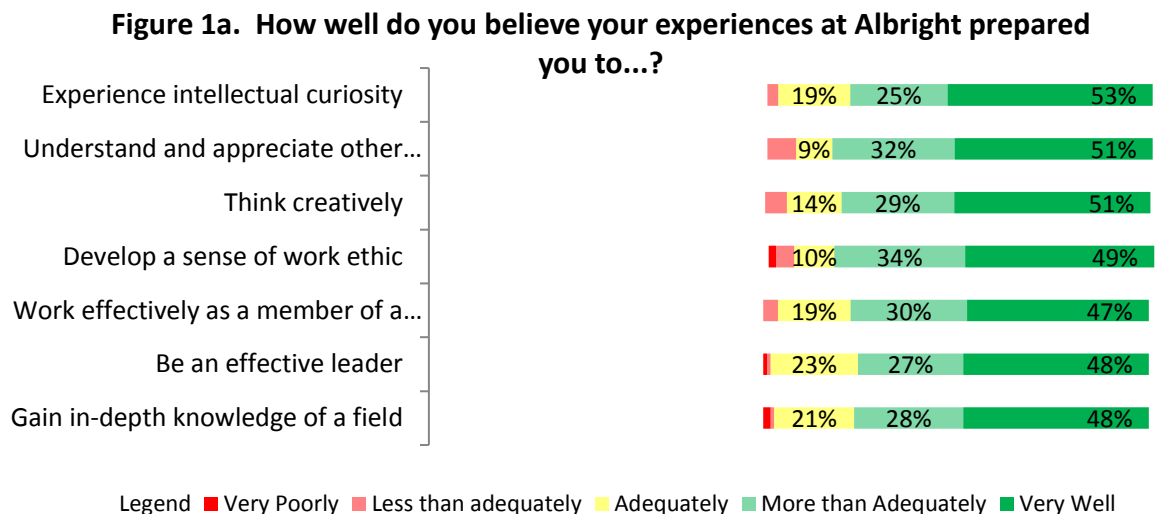
Several national and in-house surveys the College administers yield indirect data about more general learning outcomes related to skills and abilities important to Albright's vision of liberal education. For example, most items in the 2015 HEDS Senior Survey map directly to one of the general education learning goals, and others do so indirectly. Results suggest that Albright seniors are acquiring these skills and abilities at levels similar (or greater, in the case of "effective writing") to seniors at peer Colleges (see Table 4.2. below).

Table 4.2. 2015 HEDS Senior Survey - College contribution to student skills, abilities, and development (response means)

	Albright 2013	Albright 2015	Peers 2015
Critical thinking	3.48	3.56	3.49
Effective writing	3.40	3.49	3.34
Information literacy	3.41	3.46	3.40
Quantitative literacy	3.16	3.36	3.30
Problem solving	3.28	3.33	3.26
Creative thinking	3.33	3.27	3.18
Careful reading	3.29	3.27	3.30
Effective speaking	3.23	3.24	3.17
Teamwork	3.15	3.20	3.04
Integrative thinking:	3.23	3.15	3.19
Ethical reasoning	2.96	3.01	2.96
Intercultural knowledge and competence	2.89	2.87	2.89
Civic engagement	2.58	2.53	2.65
Response means based on a four point scale of frequency: 1 "very little", 2 "some", 3 "quite a bit", 4 "very much"			

The success of the student learning experience at Albright was also highlighted in the 2015 Graduate Survey from the traditional day program, in which recent graduates were asked how well their experiences at Albright College prepared them in a series of skills, detailed below:

Figure 4.4. General Intellectual Preparation (Traditional Graduate Survey, 2015, Figures 1a-1b)



**Figure 1b. How well do you believe your experiences at Albright prepared you to...?**



The modal response for the majority of skills in this survey was either “more than adequately” or “very well” (except with regard to “reading and expressing in a foreign language”). Results show that our graduates believe Albright prepared them very well in skills and abilities basic to the liberal arts and high-impact learning.

### **Organizing Administrative Assessment Alignment and Practices**

On the administrative side, linkage of administrative goals that directly support student learning outcomes is less common. Division and departmental goals are aligned with the strategic goals of the College through the well-established annual goal process. Each area submits three to five goals and identifies explicit linkages to specific strategic goals, with one goal targeted for assessment. Annual goal reports by division serve as evidence of goal alignment and are posted on SPIRA. An analysis of division level priority goals in 2015-2016 reveals that 53% of goal activity aligns with the strategic goals that “Foster Academic Excellence” and “Strengthen Our Learning Community.” “Development and Stewardship of Resources” accounts for 47% of designated goal alignments.

In addition to the assessment of student learning occurring in the classroom, assessment of student learning occurs across campus departments as evidenced by the work of the Writing Center, Academic Learning Center, and Career Development Center.

### **Writing Center**

For 2010-2013, students using the Writing Center were provided a link at the end of each semester to an online survey that included questions related to student learning outcomes (ability to apply what they learned towards future writing). These results were reviewed by the director each semester to guide unit planning and goal-setting. For 2013-2015, the Writing Center switched to a new survey in which students who used the center were provided a survey link after each individual session, which allowed the assessment to be tied to individual tutors and reviewed on a more ongoing basis. This survey includes multiple-choice questions (including whether their needs and concerns were addressed) as well as open-ended questions regarding what they learned that they could apply to future writing and on their suggestions for change. These results are provided to tutors four times a year, at which point the tutors are guided by the director to reflect upon changes they want to make to their individual tutoring; the survey results are also reviewed by the director to guide unit goals as part of the College's yearly assessment and goal-setting process. In addition, tutors fill out a self-evaluation at the end of each semester that includes the questions "What are some ways you want to change, grow or develop as a tutor or employee? Is there a way the director or Tutor Managers can help you with this?" and "Is there anything else I [the director] should know about what would give you a more positive work experience or help our writers have an even stronger learning experience?" After tutors fill out the evaluation, they meet with the director for a one-on-one conference to discuss the evaluation, and the results are compiled by the director to be used along with the client survey results as part of the Academic Affairs yearly goal-setting process, and reporting is noted in the Writing Center end of year and assessment reports.

The assessment process continues and as a result of these assessments, the Writing Center regularly adjusts its hours/scheduling, operational procedures, tutor training topics, and tutor hiring criteria. For example, the center has included new tutor training sessions on topics such as reading/writing scientific texts, tutoring second-language learners, how to hold more "in depth" sessions, and conventions of psychology writing; hired more tutors with a wider range of majors and areas of writing expertise, including social and natural science majors; added hours for more year-round coverage for ADP students; increased its use of social media; and increased mentoring of new tutors by experienced tutors (see Standard 9).

## **Academic Learning Center**

Twice a semester, the Academic Learning Center surveys tutors and students receiving tutoring, students on academic probation at the end of each semester, and students who attend academic skills workshops; these assessments include questions about learning and takeaways. As a result of its assessment, the center augmented both its number of workshops and the range of topics; increased its number of study groups; and provided more resources for use by tutors and tutees. These resources are available on Moodle and include handbooks and other documents for tips and tutoring in sciences, math, languages, and other subjects. There has also been increased outreach to and collaboration with faculty members to improve student-faculty connections, including faculty involvement in discipline-focused group tutor meetings (see Chapter Five).

## **Experiential Learning and Career Development Center (ELCDC)**

Career Services surveys students who visit after each appointment; the survey includes an open-ended question asking students to indicate what they learned. In the past year, 84% of students indicated at least one learning outcome. In addition, based on an assessment of their attendance rates at workshops and events, ELCDC made a programmatic change to conduct group events in highly used student areas, including ones targeted to specific communities and involving “partner facilitators” such as students, faculty, coaches, alumni, or employers.

## **Communicating Assessment**

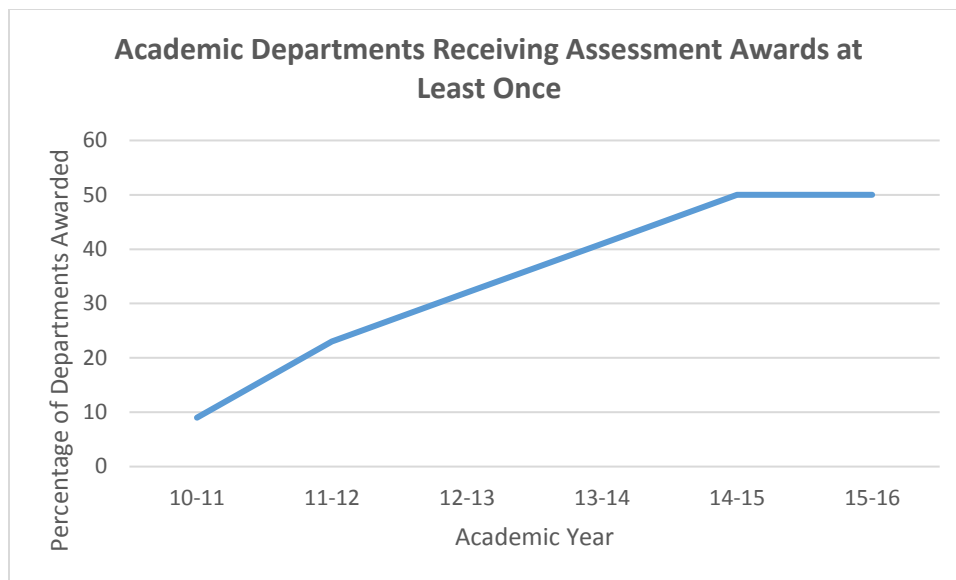
One of the main tools for communicating assessment activities to the Albright community is the “Celebrating Exemplary Assessment Awards.” Examples of model assessment are identified by the Assessment Committee, which gives the awards to deserving departments and areas each year. The awards are announced at a college-wide meeting. Citations for the awards are posted on SPIRA and made available to any interested internal viewer. These results then serve as guides for departments and areas as they pursue new and unfamiliar assessment techniques.

In addition to serving as a communication aid, the assessment awards provide evidence that not only the quantity but also the quality of assessment has increased. Departments and areas can receive the award more than once, but not for the same type of assessment activity. Consequently, an active award program shows either that departments or areas have continued to try new assessments, or that new departments have introduced high-quality assessments. In fact, an increasing percentage of departments have developed award-winning assessments over time, as shown in Figure 4.5. If high-level assessment were occurring in just a few departments, the percentage would saturate and stay constant. Instead, nearly half of all departments have performed award-worthy assessment, while only



three (14%) have received two awards. This indicates that departments are increasingly adopting successful assessment of student learning.

Figure 4.5. Academic departments receiving assessment awards



The sophistication of what constitutes award-worthy assessment has also increased over time. In the first year, for example, assessment activities were fairly basic. As mentioned earlier, the biology and physics departments received the award for doing a curriculum map and using the results to propose curricular changes. One citation read: “For use of a wide range of assessment tools, especially a curriculum map to identify gaps in the introductory biology sequence (BIO 203).” Three years later, curriculum maps had been adopted by many departments and were no longer award-worthy. A science department that year received an award with the following citation: “For direct assessment of student learning using national field tests at multiple levels and using diverse student work for detailed assessment of course-level learning goals.” The increased sophistication is clear. The department is now using direct assessment at multiple levels of the curriculum (i.e., introductory and upper level). This kind of progress is typical of what has been observed in the assessment awards since 2011-2012.

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Albright College has made significant strides in its assessment practices since its last decennial review and was commended by the Commission for this progress in 2012, in response to our Periodic Review Report. A culture of assessment has taken firm root, as has a culture of aligned planning, budgeting, and assessment that strengthens Albright’s institutional effectiveness. The rate of submission and the quality of assessment plans has increased significantly in the past ten years, and meaningful assessment

occurs both in academic departments and administrative units. A college-wide Assessment Committee champions assessment and has helped create a more systematic approach to goal-setting and end-of-year reporting, including an assessment rubric for annual reports. The Committee has designed and distributed Assessment Awards to showcase assessment exemplars. This Committee also designed an Administrative Area Program Review process as an analog to the Academic Program Review. The College is still improving the defining and publicizing of student and institutional learning outcomes, especially in non-academic areas. Also, assessment of general education (a new program implemented Fall 2013) is accordingly recent, and the College must ensure that general education assessment becomes a faculty-wide initiative.

### **Recommendations**

1. Strengthen alignment of course and program-level student learning outcomes through improved reporting and communication mechanisms to make student learning outcomes and evidence more accessible at the course, program and institutional levels (Standard 14)
2. Formally integrate assessment of learning outcomes of Accelerated Degree Program majors and general education into annual college-wide assessment and planning (Standard 14)

### **Suggestions**

1. Develop administrative goals where appropriate that are connected to student learning outcomes, especially in student support areas, and provide related professional development for staff as needed
2. Review Assessment Committee role and determine opportunities to collaborate with other faculty committees and academic processes to further a sustainable, broadly based assessment culture
3. Increase faculty development in assessment, including training for individual departments and adjuncts

## CHAPTER 5

### STUDENT ADMISSION, RETENTION, AND SUPPORT

This chapter addresses *Characteristics of Excellence* Standards 8 (Student Admissions and Retention) and 9 (Student Support Services) and was first drafted by self-study working group number four, co-chaired by Albright's then-Vice President for Enrollment Management and a faculty member in Theatre, a former chair of the faculty who now serves as interim associate dean. This chapter explores efforts across the College, principally in the Enrollment, Student Affairs, and Academic Affairs divisions, to select, admit, and retain students who will most benefit from Albright's mission and thrive in our academic community. Albright's highly collaborative culture across divisions is effective at attracting and supporting appropriate students. The College meets these Standards and offers the recommendations and suggestions listed at the end of this chapter.

#### **Admission Policy and Procedures**

The College's admission policies and procedures are readily available on the College website, as is additional information about how Admission officers evaluate applications. These pages clearly convey the requirements for admission and how applicants' materials will be processed. There are separate web pages for transfer students and for international admissions.

The Financial Aid website explains Albright's policy of meeting institutionally determined need, and does so in language intended to lessen anxiety about the unfamiliar and seemingly difficult financial aid process and to let families know that the office is there to support them. This page clearly outlines what applicants/students must do in order to complete the financial aid process. With each step there is an explanation and link to take them directly to the location to complete the online forms. Deadlines are clearly indicated. The Financial Aid office is part of a new student services suite that opened in 2014 in order to bring the Registrar, Student Accounts, and Financial Aid into one location to better serve students.

Prospective students find information about Albright's academic programs in the web-based catalog. Links to the particular curricula offered through the Accelerated Degree Programs (ADP) are also included on this page; information on the graduate Education program is provided through the Education pages. The direct link to each program allows students to navigate easily between majors/departments. The general education curriculum page describes the goals and philosophy of a liberal arts education and clearly states Albright's general education requirements.

High school academic GPA is used as the primary academic predictor for admission, along with test scores when available (Albright is test-optional). Placement testing occurs on a very limited basis, in 2016 only for English composition, and only for those with a high school GPA under 3.5 and for whom the College had no SAT or ACT score; this testing is intended solely to identify those who may be placed in a special section of English composition, 101+, which gives additional instruction to students whose writing skills are below the norm of accepted students. For several years we did online testing for foreign language placement in French and Spanish (using WebCAPE), as a supplement to analysis of high school grades, but its utility was never demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Modern Foreign Languages department or administration.

### Recruitment

As discussed previously, Albright College is tuition-dependent, and staff and faculty work together to support the recruitment, admission, and retention of talented students for the traditional day program and the Accelerated Degree Programs. Under the leadership of the Vice President for Enrollment Management and in consultation with the chief financial officer, the Admission and Financial Aid staffs create strategies and plans to meet enrollment goals and net revenue targets while supporting the mission of the College and responding to demographic and market trends. Albright’s Financial Aid unit has been effective in working with families, and its cohort default rates are well under the national rate:

Table 5.1. Three-Year Student Loan Default Rates

Year	Albright Default Rate	National Default Rate
2013	4.6%	11.3%
2012	6.4%	11.8%
2011	6.7%	13.7%

[https://nsls.ed.gov/nsls/nsls\\_SA/defaultmanagement/cohortdetail\\_3yr.cfm?sno=0&ope\\_id=003229](https://nsls.ed.gov/nsls/nsls_SA/defaultmanagement/cohortdetail_3yr.cfm?sno=0&ope_id=003229)

After a shortfall during the 2012 recruitment cycle, the College needed to change its recruitment and retention methods. To attract quality students and improve affordability, in 2013 Albright joined a small group of selective colleges that meet 100% of institutionally defined need. This approach, discussed in more detail in Chapter Two above, uses information provided on the FAFSA and/or CSS Profile in addition to information disclosed in the admission file. Applicants are first evaluated for merit scholarships by the Admission staff; then the Financial Aid staff assesses remaining need, which is met through a combination of state, federal, and institutional aid.

Freshman enrollment was significantly higher in 2013 and 2014 under the new financial aid strategy, indicating a positive initial impact on recruitment.

Table 5.2. Fall Enrollment (Headcount), 2008-2016

	<b>5 Year Avg., 2008-2012</b>	<b>2013*</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>
Incoming Traditional Freshmen	492	655	543	493	596
Total Traditional Undergraduate	1645	1717	1745	1734	1863
Accelerated Degree Programs	598	598	585	485	421
Graduate	68	35	33	28	14
Total Enrollment	2311	2350	2363	2247	2298

\* indicates the year the “meeting 100% financial aid strategy” was implemented

The Enrollment team has now recruited four classes under the 100% need policy and is assessing its effect on enrollment, retention of students, and net tuition revenue (the subject of a recommendation above related to Standard 3). The class entering in fall 2015 missed its target by approximately 62 students (enrollment was 493), perhaps due to a 3% reduction in the discount rate, from 65% to 62% (Enrollment Plan). However, the increased retention rate (discussed below in this chapter) combined with the decrease in discount made up for a majority of the difference in revenue that year. In 2016 a large incoming class (596) was still below projections, but discount rates rose, leaving a budget gap to close. Goals going forward are more in line with our actual results and call for freshmen classes of about 590 students. Also discussed in Chapter Two, the College is adjusting its approach to the discount rate, focusing on meeting net revenue goals rather than prioritizing hitting a particular discount rate. The College has begun a partnership with consultants Hardwick Day to strategically achieve net tuition revenue with new enrollment and discount goals. College leadership has stressed the importance of maintaining the mission of the College while meeting our necessary net tuition goals, and we will continue our commitment to diversity and to improving the quality of admitted students.

The College’s commitment to meeting financial need and to diversity should position us well for the future in light of demographic changes forecast through 2025. Expected changes in the recruiting landscape include a predicted decline in overall high school graduates, a decline in Caucasian applicants, and an increase in the numbers of college-bound Hispanic and African-American students. (Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education). Currently about 40% of Albright students are non-Caucasian.

Table 5.3. Albright Undergraduate Demographics

Ethnicity	% of Students Reporting (rounded)	
	Traditional Program (2015)	ADP (2015)
Caucasian	58	43
African-American	21	7
Hispanic	11	5.5
Asian	3	1
International	3	0
American Indian/Alaskan native	1	0.3
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0	0
Multi-racial, non-Hispanic	1	0
Unknown	2	43

We anticipate increased competition in our market to attract deposits from high-achieving and low-need applicants through the admission process, yet we expect our already diverse community to be an asset.

The recruitment and admission process for the Accelerated Degree Programs (ADP) is handled separately from the traditional program, and the “meet need” strategy is not used to recruit these students. ADP degree cohorts are based in ten locations in central and southeastern Pennsylvania, some taught on the campuses of community college partners. ADP is priced lower than the traditional program and uses only federal and state aid to meet student need, with the addition of partnership scholarships for students who transfer from partner community colleges. ADP, too, maintains a significant level of diversity among the students enrolled, although less than the traditional program, and its commitment to a diverse student body is important to that program’s future growth as well. Note in the table above that the high number of those not indicating ethnicity make ADP’s diversity difficult to characterize.

Because non-traditional students often have family responsibilities and are likely to work full-time while pursuing their degrees, ADP’s accelerated format and multiple locations are attractive features for these students. And, consistent with our institutional vision statement, our cohort model of degree completion creates an especially “supportive and caring learning community.” While some sources predict an increase in the number of non-traditional adult students pursuing undergraduate degrees over the next decade, recent data indicate to the contrary that college enrollment nation-wide has decreased for both non-traditional and traditional-age students (United States Census Bureau, 2014). Although the decrease occurred mainly at 2-year schools, this decline could affect ADP, since many students come to our program following a 2-year degree. Projected enrollments for ADP, represented

below, are not expected to increase over the next several years, in part since adult enrollments tend to be counter-cyclical to the health of the overall economy.

Table 5.4. Accelerated Degree Program Registrations

Year	Actual			Projections			
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Enrollment	4498	4287	3584	3212	3081	3123	3183

### Enrollment Capacities

Enrollment targets must correspond to Albright College’s infrastructure and capacity. The academic programs are influenced by the available facilities and classroom space, and the residential halls and their related programming are central to the experiences of residential students.

In 2013-2014, the College engaged Rickes Associates to conduct an Instructional Space Utilization Study (see especially Figure 13 in that study). The goal of this study was to analyze classroom space in comparison with commonly accepted metrics for adequate space, and to develop recommendations about the number and capacity of needed instructional spaces. The study considered a projected enrollment of 1,800, which was 5% more than the 2013 full-time enrollment. The study also included the impact of the new classrooms in Roessner Hall, which opened in fall 2014 after extensive renovation turned it from an office building into a modern, technologically advanced academic facility. The consultants’ conclusion was that the College has sufficient classroom space, and in fact some excess, but only if some spaces are “right-sized” through careful redistribution of existing classroom space. With the addition of Roessner, the College has 46 general-use classrooms. The study also noted problems with many of our existing classrooms: HVAC problems; the reliability and dependability of technology; inflexible/immovable furniture; poor design; small desks; and overcrowded space. While some of the report’s recommendations have been addressed, the College has not implemented the bulk of them despite their institutional importance. It is also the case that class size in some academic programs – such as fashion and courses connected to digital media – are limited by the size of instructional space, which impedes program growth, adds to teaching load by multiplying sections, and in some cases could impact progress to degree.

### Residential Capacity and Options

Significant changes have taken place in Albright’s residential life since the last Self-Study—first, a requirement that traditional undergraduate non-commuter day students in their first and second years must live in campus housing. More recently, the College announced plans to institute a four-year

residency requirement (with exceptions) in Fall 2017. To accommodate a growing number of residential students, we increased the number of beds by changing some larger rooms from doubles to triples; developed theme-based affinity housing for groups of 3 to 6 students in single-family homes owned by the College; reduced the number of Resident Assistants in single rooms; built new rooms into one residence hall; and converted some lounges into triple rooms. With those changes, the College could accommodate most of the first-year, sophomore, and junior classes. To accommodate the four-year residency requirement, the new residential facility described in Chapter Two will be key; while privately owned it will be managed by Residential Life staff. This facility, part of the neighborhood improvements mentioned earlier, will be a modern and well-appointed addition to Albright’s housing capacity. A review of residential policies at our comparison schools showed most have a similar four-year requirement.

Table 5.5. Occupancy of Residence Halls - Traditional Undergraduates

Semester	Enrollment	# Housed on Campus	% Students in Housing	% Housing Capacity
Fall 2012	1589	1039	65.4%	90.4%
Spring 2013	1457	950	65.2%	81.8%
Fall 2013	1717	1191	69.4%	100.0%
Spring 2014	1603	1100	68.6%	89.6%
Fall 2014	1745	1249	71.6%	102.0%
Spring 2015	1612	1156	71.7%	94.6%
Fall 2015	1734	1132	65.3%	89.9%
Spring 2016	1595	1067	66.8%	82.5%

Residential life consists of more than the capacity of the residence halls, of course, and the needs of residential students were broadly assessed in an internal Student Satisfaction Survey in 2015. While response was relatively low (about 20% of residents), the 2015 survey revealed some areas of dissatisfaction (preference for off-campus living; resistance to supervision by Resident Assistants; expense) and also suggestions for improvement (updating facilities; improving cleanliness; more variety in housing types; changes in staff procedures and room selection processes). In response to the survey, improvements in training and programming have been made, and a Housing Selection Committee was formed and charged with gathering student input on improving the selection process. Survey responses were strongly in favor of updated facilities and overwhelmingly called for a new residence hall, both of which are in process.

Some strategies to increase housing capacity paid off in terms of improved residential life as well. The affinity housing referenced above allows small groups of students to propose a one-year plan for their



group, and if awarded an affinity house must create programming for the residential community at large. Example affinity groups have been focused on sustainability, music, gaming, and women’s basketball. In addition, two living-learning communities have been established, one for freshmen and one, “Arts in Court,” for artistic students who live in Court, a residence hall slightly removed from campus that benefits from having a focused community.

### Retention and Attrition

Freshman-to-sophomore retention figures since the new “meet need” financial aid strategy began started out significantly higher in the first two years and then dropped back in the third, yet with an overall net rise in retention, as shown below:

Table 5.6. Fall-to-Fall Retention History, 2008-2015

Year	5 Year Average (2008-2012)	2013*	2014	2015	2016
<i>Overall Retention</i>	80.78%	80.87%	80.36%	81.72%	82.53%
Freshmen-Sophomore Retention	73.83%	71.46%	76.49%	77.78%	71.20%
Sophomore-Junior Retention	80.01%	80.28%	76.22%	80.15%	84.70%
Junior-Senior Retention	91.92%	92.94%	91.14%	92.67%	92.67%

\* indicates the year the “meeting 100% financial aid strategy” was implemented

The first “meet need” cohort, which entered in fall of 2013, showed a 5% increase in the freshman-sophomore retention rate, even in a year in which overall retention fell. The impact of this model on retention will be studied further as more data become available; see Chapter Two for more detailed discussion of this financial aid model.

The College has established a strong safety net of policies and committees to catch students who may be at risk of leaving before completing their degrees. Before the start of the freshman year, Admission counselors note incoming students who may require special attention or outreach prior to matriculation and share their concerns with the Retention Task Force (RTF). RTF is a collaborative team from administration and staff in academic support, admissions, student affairs, residential life, public safety, athletics, and the health center that coordinates outreach to students who are having difficulties. Many students are identified through an online Student Alert form, widely used by faculty and staff (between 200 and 337 times in each of the past three years). The majority of the Student Alerts are submitted by faculty, and academic problems are the most frequently raised concerns. The RTF quickly funnels the information to the appropriate campus official to address. Every two weeks the RTF meets to share information on new alerts and persistent concerns. This committee provides an opportunity for staff in different departments to share information and to align their approaches

to students who may be experiencing medical, financial, academic, or social difficulties. The RTF data are collected and analyzed at the end of each year. Data from the five previous years reveal that 40% to 50% of the students discussed were freshmen. Of the students reported to the Retention Task Force as being at risk, more than 50% were retained to register for the following year in four of the prior five academic years.

The RTF also provides an annual compilation of the reasons why students leave Albright College, based primarily on exit interviews conducted by the office of the Dean of Students. These data are included in the annual Enrollment Plan. The most frequent reason traditional students give for leaving the College is financial, which was a strong rationale for the change in financial aid strategy. The second most frequent reason is some aspect of academics, including performance and program preference.

Table 5.7. Reasons Students Give for Attrition

	AY 10-11	AY 11-12	AY 12-13	AY 13-14	AY 14-15	Total AY 10-15
Financial	25.8%	22.1%	26.8%	30.0%	24.2%	25.8%
Academic performance	17.0%	17.1%	18.7%	21.8%	18.5%	18.7%
Different major	23.9%	19.9%	15.0%	18.8%	8.9%	17.2%
Not right "fit"	6.4%	6.4%	13.0%	7.6%	13.6%	9.4%
Closer to home	6.8%	7.8%	8.5%	7.3%	9.9%	8.1%
Medical	7.2%	6.4%	6.5%	5.6%	9.3%	7.0%
Personal Reasons	4.5%	3.9%	4.1%	3.6%	7.3%	4.7%
Dissatisfaction with activity/situation	5.3%	6.8%	4.5%	2.0%	4.6%	4.6%
Family issues	3.0%	9.6%	2.8%	2.0%	3.6%	4.5%

A committee related to RTF, comprised of senior staff members from Enrollment Management, Student Affairs, and Academic Affairs, recently revised our withdrawal policy to better serve both exiting students and the institution by making clearer, more comprehensive policy and procedures (Compass, General College Policies, #s P, E, D).

The Accelerated Degree Programs have no retention committee; the Director of ADP is responsible for compiling, analyzing, and sharing data with staff members on the trends for newly matriculated cohorts within ADP. Semester-to-semester retention in the ADP major cohorts is impressive – 90-96% in 2015-2016. The data suggest that newly matriculated students with a previous college/university cumulative grade point average (GPA) under 2.99 should receive special advising attention from ADP staff. ADP staff refer students to specific services tailored for their needs, including the Writing Center, Smarthinking (online tutoring), and the Disability Services Office. The

majority of students who leave ADP do so for the following reasons: lack of financial aid, cost, personal reasons, medical reasons, and change in academic major. Some students do not maintain the required GPA of 2.0 and are academically dismissed. ADP has recently started using a change of enrollment form for students dropping a course or withdrawing from a course or a program. This form will allow ADP to maintain an electronic record of the reasons students drop courses or withdraw from a course or a program. That data will allow ADP to better target its retention efforts.

### Admission of Less-Prepared Students

The applications of marginally qualified prospective students are presented by Admission representatives to an Admission Review Committee, which includes a faculty representative and meets as needed – weekly during peak times – to consider these cases. These students are identified by low high school grades, especially from weaker high schools; low test scores (although Albright does not require standardized test scores for admission); or individual factors identified by the student or references.

Table 5.8. Less-Prepared Students Admitted

Entering freshmen	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
% who had GPA of 2.49 or below	7	12	8	7	5	5
% in bottom quarter of grad class	3	5	7	6	3	6
% SAT Verbal below 400	1	1	0	2	1	1
% SAT Math below 400	0	0	9	2	1	0
# submitting SAT score	-	-	247	419	331	298
% submitting SAT score	-	-	60	64	61	60

*Appendix G, "Enrollment Data Analysis," Albright Enrollment Plan 2015-16*

Albright College does not require less-prepared freshmen to participate in any particular program and does not offer remedial courses. Special consideration may be given to the first-semester course selection, in consultation with the Registrar and the academic advisor. Academic Affairs, specifically the Academic Learning Center (ALC), makes a deliberate effort to inform these students of the various support services, but does not mandate their use. Marginally prepared students are often among the Student Alerts addressed by the Retention Task Force. In addition to such retention safety nets described earlier, all freshmen receive midterm grade reports in all classes, and those with unsatisfactory grades are contacted by the dean and referred to support services. After their first semester, students with unsatisfactory grades may be placed on academic probation, which requires

structured participation in a probation recovery program offered by the ALC (discussed later in this chapter along with other support services).

Previously, some less-prepared students were invited to participate in Summer Start, a five-week residential program that was held on campus in July-August and included one for-credit academic class, one study-skills class, and one life-skills class. A staff mentor and several student mentors lived with the Summer Start students in the residence halls and tried to instill the discipline of good study habits and living in an academic community. Students who achieved at least a grade of C in all courses, incurred no social violations, and had the recommendation of the program director were invited to matriculate in the fall. Albright offered the Summer Start program for more than twenty years; in the past six years, enrollments varied between 11 and 29 students, and matriculation rates varied between 22% and 92%. 2016 was a historically poor year for acceptances – only 4 of 18 students (22%) qualified for matriculation – and the program has been suspended as the College explores better strategies to meet the needs of these students. Summer Start had equivocal results. Assessment, the latest in 2016, found that the performance of admitted Summer Start students was not significantly different from that of other matriculated students in the bottom 10% of the admitted class and, like them, significantly lower than freshmen as a whole.

Table 5.9. First-year GPA and Retention, Summer Start and Other Students

<b>2012-2015</b>	<b>Summer Start</b>	<b>All freshmen</b>
N	38	2102
First-year GPA	2.12	2.76
Retained	22	1571
Retention %	57.9%	74.7%

### **Transfer Students**

Albright’s transfer policy is clearly stated through the Admission web pages and is linked to the UCAN site (“Transfer of Credit Policy” button), which is accessible from the College’s home page (UCAN is the University and College Accountability Network). Transfer information for the Accelerated Degree Programs is available on its web pages and in the ADP student handbook (part IX.D, p. 14). Students can also receive transfer credit for designated scores on an Advanced Placement exam (AP), International Baccalaureate exam (IB), a College Level Examination Program (CLEP) Exam, or a DANTES-DSST Exam. AP and IB policies for traditional students appear on the Admission pages, and CLEP and DANTES information is in the student handbook for ADP, where most such activity

occurs (part IX.F). CLEP is rare in the traditional undergraduate program, but is addressed in the Catalog (under Credit by Examination).

Albright's traditional program has transfer articulation agreements with fourteen partner community colleges throughout Pennsylvania and New Jersey, while ADP partners with eleven of these. Partners are listed on the ADP transfer page cited above and, with access to the articulation agreement, on the Admission articulation web page. Most of the articulation agreements include course-by-course transfer equivalency guides, which Albright is in the process of reviewing and updating to reflect our new general education requirements and revised course offerings at the partner community colleges. One example is our transfer guide for Reading Area Community College.

Albright continues to have success with students transferring to the ADP. Over the past three years, the percentage of students entering ADP from community colleges has steadily increased, from 57% in 2013-14 to 61% in 2015-16. The traditional day program admits between 40 and 50 transfers per year; the College would like to attract more traditional transfer students and has attempted several strategies with limited success. Opportunities for recruiting more transfer students to Albright's traditional day program from our area community colleges are limited, in part from their own lagging enrollments and their increasingly vocational curricula. The College plans to pursue more program-to-program agreements to recruit successful transfer students into particular programs of study (previous attempts have failed because of curriculum changes and employee turnover at the community colleges). Two policies make the Albright traditional day program less transfer-friendly than some of our competitors: the requirement that half the coursework to graduate be taken at Albright, and relatively rigorous standards for transfer courses to receive Albright credit. Thorough review of potential transfer credits can take considerable time. Changing these policies might increase the number of transfer applications we receive, yet could be at the expense of our academic reputation, and so is something the College has not chosen to do up to this point. ADP transfer policies are more transfer-friendly, allowing up to 78 credits to transfer but still requiring 16 Albright courses, almost all in the major.

### **International Students**

Albright College values the contributions that international students make to the campus community, intellectually, culturally, and financially. Many international students apply directly to the College; their applications are managed by the Associate Director of Admission. Some apply through a partner placement organization such as CTM Education, Sakae, and International Student Exchange Services (ISES). In fall 2015, there were 50 international students on campus (3% of the full-time day student

population); of these, 62% had applied through one of these organizations (2015-16 Enrollment Plan, pp. 36-38, 152). In 2016, international enrollment was 46. Albright Admission representatives have participated in LITZ USA Fairs in Hong Kong and Macau for the last six years. The Assistant Director did recently travel to Asia to expand recruitment with the ISES and New Oriental organizations. In fall 2014, three senior officers of the College travelled to meet partners in Asia and signed eight new collaboration agreements with international institutions. From 2012 to 2014, the College also began to expand recruitment efforts in Saudi Arabia with approval from the Saudi government for Albright representatives to participate in recruitment events there. Currently we are pulling back on staff international travel for recruitment and exploring other partnerships.

Enrollment officers report several challenges in recruiting international students to Albright. Many international students would prefer to attend a “university” rather than a “college,” and many would prefer to be in a major city. Albright has no engineering programs, and our business program does not yet have specialized accreditation (but is currently working towards this); prospective international students often seek these features. Albright’s international enrollment dropped significantly after the Provost and President decided to suspend the non-credit English as a Second Language (ESL) program in 2011, pending a thorough review and restructuring (2015-16 Enrollment Plan, 112). Placement organizations indicated that lack of ESL support hindered international recruitment into the degree program. The administration has worked with consultants to structure a new Albright program, offering as before both non-credit language learning and support for international students admitted directly into the College. In Fall 2016 Albright welcomed its first students into a revised program for admitted internationals. International degree applicants are currently directed to an international section of the Admission website, where the application requirements for international students are clearly presented. Non-English speakers must submit a standardized test score (TOEFL, IELTS, SAT, ACT), although specific cut-off scores are not indicated.

### **Graduation Rates and Student Satisfaction**

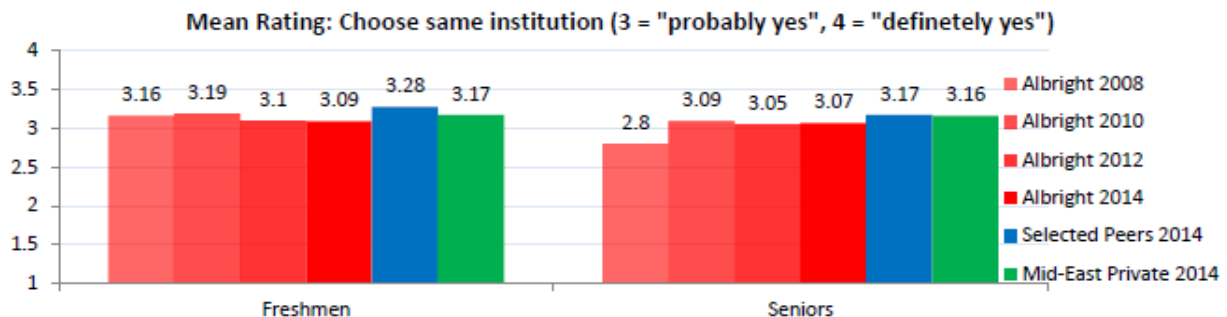
Historically, six-year graduation rates for Albright have been above the national median, but they dipped below with the Fall 2006 cohort, as seen in the table below. The number has begun to climb back up, but not consistently. The expectation is that the new financial aid policy and improved retention will improve this trend, especially because financial concerns have been the largest expressed reason for attrition.

Table 5.10. Six-year Graduation Rates

	F2004 Cohort	F2005 Cohort	F2006 Cohort	F2007 Cohort	F2008 Cohort	F2009 Cohort	F2010 Cohort
ALBRIGHT	61.4%	60.0%	52.6%	53.7%	52.7%	57.9%	54.2%
National Median	56.8%	55.2%	56.2%	56.3%	55.4%	n/a	n/a
CIC Mid-East 25th Percentile	52.2%	50.8%	50.7%	51.3%	52.9%	n/a	n/a
CIC Mid-East 50th Percentile	64.0%	62.1%	63.0%	61.8%	62.6%	n/a	n/a
CIC Mid-East 75th Percentile	75.0%	73.9%	74.1%	73.9%	75.3%	n/a	n/a

The overall satisfaction of Albright’s graduating seniors appears promising. Seniors at Albright have a strong belief that if they could start the college process over again, they would still attend Albright. This response is not statistically different than the responses from selected peers and mid-east private institutions, as shown in the figure below from the most recent (2014) NSSHE survey. The data indicate that Albright attracts and retains students whose interests, goals, and abilities are consistent with the opportunities the College provides.

Figure 5.1. Student Satisfaction: Would Choose the Same School Again (NSSHE, 2014)



According to our most recent AICUP survey of first-year students (2013), more than 90% of Albright freshmen said they planned to return the next fall, almost 77% saying “definitely.” Although not significantly different from our comparison institutions, this result continues the large improvement observed in the 2011 survey.

Table 5.11. Freshmen’s Plans to Return Next Year (AICUP FYSS 2013)

**Table 8. Plans to return for a sophomore year**

	Albright College			Comparison group
	2009	2011	2013	2013
Definitely yes	57.3%	74.2%	76.7%	80.8%
Probably yes	24.8%	13.7%	14.0%	13.2%

## **The City of Reading**

Albright's location in Reading, Pennsylvania, presents challenges and opportunities for the recruitment and retention of students. Data from a 2016 campus-wide survey of part and full-time faculty about the challenges and opportunities of our location identified three prominent themes in respondents' perspectives: poverty, crime and safety concerns, and educational opportunities. Despite the second perception, campus statistics collected under the Clery Act and VAWA along with disciplinary statistics (more fully available in the annual safety report) indicate that, with the exception of burglary, Albright's campus is no more prone to crime than our comparison schools. Possibly, there is a disconnect between the actual incidence of crime and the perception of safety by respondents. Albright is significantly disadvantaged by Reading's poverty and depressed economic state. The educational attainment and average household income of Reading's citizens lag far behind those of most other cities, and the poverty rate is much greater, according to U.S. Census Bureau information. These factors lead to fewer services and businesses in the area that might prove attractive to prospective and current students. For this reason, as discussed in Chapter Two, Albright takes an active role in the city and in its neighborhood.

The most prominent theme in response to our question about our location was the educational possibilities it affords, such as opportunities for service learning, volunteering, internships/student teaching opportunities, research, and social advocacy. Relevant to these opportunities are our proximity to major cities and the diversity of Reading, which were also seen as strengths. Respondents identified numerous opportunities for academic engagement, many of which the College already embraces—service learning and volunteer opportunities with 13<sup>th</sup> and Union elementary school, the Latino community, the Haitian community, the Reading Hospital, St. Joseph's medical center, and other local agencies, schools, and businesses. Students also benefit from many recreational and cultural activities as well—the GoggleWorks Center for the Arts, IMAX theatre, a relatively large number of local sports teams, and the growing cycling and mountain biking cultures.

## **Student Support Services**

As a small liberal arts college, Albright puts student support at the center of its mission. The campus culture is student-centered, and virtually every office on campus would define its work as “student support services.” The supportive nature of the Albright community is a recurring theme in feedback from students, alumni, faculty, and staff. For example, in the 2014 NSSE survey, Albright freshmen and seniors rated their school significantly higher for maintaining a supportive environment.



Table 5.12. Ratings of “Supportive Environment” (NSSE, 2014, Table 7)

Cohort	Albright	Selected Peers			Mid-East Private		
	Mean	Mean	Significance	Effect Size	Mean	Significance	Effect Size
FR	42.7	39.9	**	.22	39.2	***	.28
SR	39.2	36.9	*	.19	36.0	**	.26

Student services are managed through four of the College’s divisions: Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Enrollment, and Administrative & Financial Services. The various offices within the divisions provide different types and levels of services to our students.

### Orienting New Students

Albright offers a warm welcome to new students, and the 3.5-day Welcome Weekend is an important kickoff to the new academic year, involving many returning students, faculty, and staff. A diverse array of sessions provides information to students and their families about residential life, academic support, business services, and information technology, along with federally mandated programming. These many activities and presentations help new students connect with their peers and think about important social issues.

Internal assessment shows that new students find the Welcome Weekend Program and their student mentors – known as POPs (Peer Orientation Persons) – highly beneficial to their transition to college life. Over the last three years, an average of over 57% of the new student class has participated in a survey of the Welcome Weekend experience. As seen in the table below, more than 91% rate the programming as good or excellent, and 95% of the new students rate their POP group leaders as good or excellent.

Table 5.13. Internal Survey of Welcome Weekend Experience

	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016
New Student Survey Participation Rate	51%	59%	61%	61%
Rating POPs Group Leaders as Good/Excellent	97%	98%	98%	99%
Rating Overall Orientation Programs as Good/Excellent	95%	93%	97%	98%

External data also affirm the quality of orientation. According to the 2013 AICUP survey of first-year students, nearly 87% of first-year students feel “generally satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the quality of their orientation experience, similar to comparison groups. Direct correlation between new student orientation programs and retention is unclear, but decades of student engagement research demonstrates the positive impact of early engagement of students with the campus community.

Table 5.14. AICUP Survey of Welcome Weekend Experience (2013)

Question 19: How satisfied are you with each of the following aspects of your college/university? Services Provided/Campus Offices						
	Albright College		Comparison Group 1		Comparison Group 2	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Very satisfied	71	47.00%	280	37.20%	907	35.50%
Generally satisfied	60	39.70%	394	52.30%	1,322	51.80%
Generally dissatisfied	16	10.60%	66	8.80%	227	8.90%
Very dissatisfied	4	2.60%	13	1.70%	96	3.80%

Specific programming is offered for transfer, international, and commuter students. Albright’s Accelerated Degree Programs (ADP) offer two types of orientation to students: a webinar orientation before the start of general education courses and then an on-site orientation for students beginning courses with their cohort within their major. Of the students who responded to last year’s ADP survey, nearly 97% felt the orientation webinar was beneficial for preparing them to succeed at Albright College. For the on-site orientation, nearly 100% rated the overall program a 4 or 5, meaning it was “highly rated.”

### Academic Advising

At Albright College, academic advising for traditional undergraduates is provided by full-time faculty members. Academic advising is one of the contractual duties of all full-time faculty members after their first year of service. Traditional undergraduate students entering Albright for the first time are assigned an advisor from the student’s major department. For combined majors, the student is assigned two academic advisors, one from each department. Undeclared students are assigned an “Alpha” advisor by the Registrar’s office and offered additional advising services while in Alpha status. Students are notified of their advisor when their schedule is finalized for the semester. Traditional students meet with their advisors for the first time during Welcome Weekend orientation, before the start of classes.

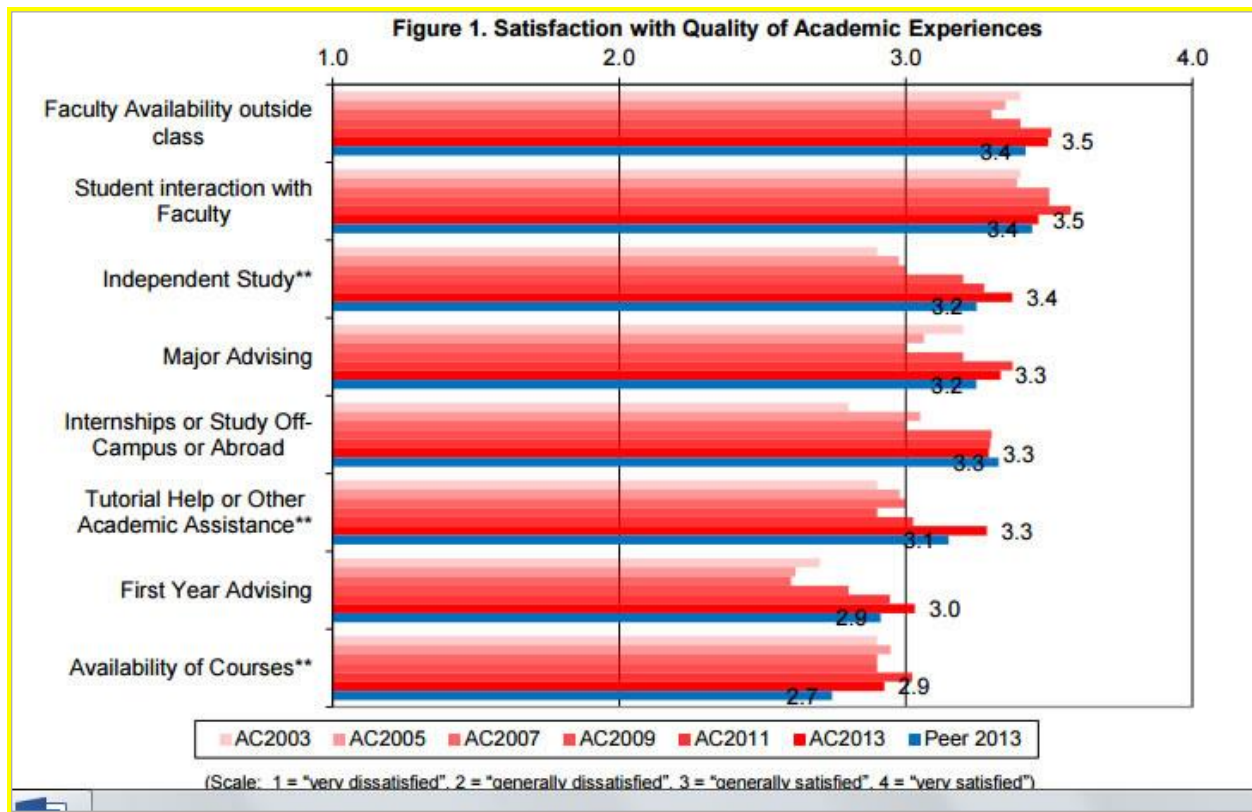
The catalog outlines the importance of academic advising to students and provides links to advising information such as academic support and academic policies. The student’s responsibilities as they relate to academic advising are clearly outlined. Advisees are required to meet with their advisor at least once per semester to review course registration for the next semester; advisors must authorize

the student's registration. However, more frequent meetings are recommended, and the importance of the advising relationship is emphasized at orientation.

The faculty Professional Council, consulting with the Office of Academic Affairs, addresses advising training in an orientation session for second-year faculty; new faculty have no advisees in their first year. This session includes training on the scope of advising, resources available, and the curriculum. Many resources on advising are available to faculty through our website. Information about advisees' academic progress, registration, and scheduling are available through the online Self-Service system, managed by the Registrar's Office. Advisors have convenient online access to general information about areas of study and courses, the general education program, academic policies and procedures, registration information, academic support services, and student at-risk forms. That said, faculty training would be more effective if scheduled during their first year, since training currently is offered after advising has already begun (during orientation). The content of training could also be improved by focusing more on in-depth, developmental advising in addition to prescriptive (course-selection focused) advising. Also, ongoing faculty training and assessment of advising are minimal.

Advising is assessed indirectly through the Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium (HEDS) Survey, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) Survey, and the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (AICUP) First-Year Student Survey. The HEDS Seniors Survey most recently indicated that students were generally satisfied with the academic advising they received at Albright, both in their first year and in their major, and the data show both a positive trend and favorable comparison with peers:

Figure 5.2. Traditional Undergraduate Satisfaction with Advising and Other Academic Experiences (HEDS Senior Survey, 2015)



Traditional undergraduate seniors in the 2014 NSSE (table 8) rated their interactions with academic advisors significantly higher than their peers elsewhere. The most recent (2013) AICUP survey of first-year students indicated that Albright scored higher than both comparison groups in terms of advisor knowledge, availability, and overall satisfaction:

Table 5.15, a-b. Traditional Undergraduate Satisfaction with Academic Advising (AICUP, 2013)

Table 5. Advisor's knowledge about how to achieve advisee's academic goals				Table 6. Overall satisfaction with quality of academic advising offered by assigned advisor			
	Albright College		Comparison group		Albright College		Comparison group
	2011	2013	2013		2011	2013	2013
Very knowledgeable	67.6%	69.3%	66.4%	Very satisfied	57.7%	67.6%	64.4%
Somewhat knowledgeable	21.8%	26.1%	28.9%	Somewhat satisfied	31.0%	28.4%	30.0%
Not very knowledgeable	9.9%	4.0%	4.2%	Not very satisfied	8.5%	2.8%	4.3%
Not at all knowledgeable	0.7%	.6%	.5%	Not at all satisfied	2.8%	1.1%	1.3%

The AICUP results also show a positive trend in relying on one’s assigned advisor, as seen below:

Table 5.16. Primary source of academic advice (AICUP, 2013)

	Albright College			Comparison Group
	2009	2011	2013	2013
Assigned advisor	18.5%	23.1%	40.3%	34.9%
Other students	21.0%	27.3%	18.8%	22.1%
Self	25.4%	18.9%	11.4%	13.3%
Family	19.0%	13.3%	9.1%	12.0%
Academic advising center	5.2%	7.7%	8.0%	5.7%
Other faculty members	5.2%	7.0%	6.3%	4.8%
College staff	5.6%	2.8%	6.3%	7.2%

The students in Albright’s Accelerated Degree Programs receive academic advising from staff Enrollment Advisors and faculty Academic Program Coordinators. Members of both groups maintain memberships with national organizations that focus on non-traditional adult learners, including the Association of Continuing Higher Education (ACHE), Council for Accelerated Programs (CAP), and Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL). One-third of the staff advisors are certified career and education advisors through CAEL. Staff members pursue professional development in the form of webinars, conferences, and certifications and have attended and presented at ACHE, CAP, and CAEL conferences.

The Noel-Levitz Adult Learner Inventory has items that assess aspects of ADP academic advising. On the relevant items, Albright responses were comparable to national means, except for one item, information on transfer courses, which scored significantly better than the benchmark. Other relevant items included support on developing an education plan, knowledgeable advisors, responsiveness of support, availability of support, “one-stop” convenience, and availability of helpful mentors.

### **Academic Support**

All students are able to use Albright’s general academic support services, specifically the Writing Center, Academic Learning Center, and Disability Services Office. These are key parts of Albright’s retention and success safety net, and they interact regularly with each other, the Retention Task Force, and the faculty committee that oversees academic standing, the Enrollment Development Committee. Their services are advertised widely, especially to first-year students. The Albright Athletics staff works closely with these offices to support the academic success of student athletes, “putting the student first in ‘student-athlete,’” as befits a Division III institution. Most coaches require freshmen to participate in regular study halls and check periodically with faculty on their success in classes. Student-athletes who are on academic probation are also typically required to attend study halls. (By College

policy, a second consecutive semester on probation makes a student ineligible to participate in athletics or campus organizations and may lead to dismissal.) As discussed below, Albright athletes graduate at higher rates than their non-athlete peers.

The Writing Center offers peer tutoring for all Albright classes in writing and, more recently, reading skills. In order to support the off-campus students in ADP, the Writing Center substantially increased its electronic offerings, in addition to regular on-campus appointments. Sessions with ADP students rose from 83 in 2009-2010 to 422 in 2014-2015, with a high of 579 in 2011-2012. In internal surveys, students who use the Writing Center report high satisfaction that their session addressed their needs and concerns (2013-2014: 97%; 2014-2015: 98%; 2015-2016: 99%; see Writing Center 2016 EOY Report, p. 203).

The Disability Services Office (DSO), which prior to 2014 was part of the Academic Learning Center, is the College's resource for students seeking ADA accommodations; Albright typically has 70 to 100 accommodated students at any given time. In an in-house 2015 survey, students who used disability support services agreed that their accommodations provided them with equal access to their education and met their needs. On thirteen satisfaction items, all average responses were greater than 4.0 on a five-point scale. In response to its own evaluation of processes related to the note-taking accommodation, the DSO reorganized its note-taking services and now makes smart-pens available to students instead of hiring note-takers. It is important to note Albright's commitment to accessibility. While it is difficult for an older campus to set a high bar for physical improvements, there is a standing \$50,000 line item in the capital budget for ADA-related improvements. The Disability Services Office reports jointly to the academic and student affairs divisions, and in 2015 the director formed a campus-wide accessibility committee to guide priorities for making the campus as accessible and welcoming as possible for those with disabilities. The Accelerated Degree Programs are served by the Writing Center and DSO, in addition to having some support resources of their own. ADP students rate "student support systems" almost identically to their national peers, according to the 2016 Noel-Levitz ALI survey.

The Academic Learning Center (ALC) offers academic counseling, academic skills workshops, an academic probation recovery program, and tutoring for lower-level general education courses and some others, using approximately 90 peer tutors. Among students who used tutoring in the ALC in 2015-2016, 85% felt they gained knowledge that was necessary for their course, and 96% reported they would recommend tutoring services to friends. The ALC and Writing Center have used the

feedback on internal surveys to add or change tutor training, hours the office is open, and ways they advertise to students.

Students who are placed on academic probation are required to participate in the Academic Probation Recovery Program through the ALC, although not all students comply. This structured program directs students to take advantage of academic support opportunities, including academic coaching meetings, academic workshops, meeting with faculty and advisors, and meeting with tutors. Students who fully participate in the program consistently earn a significant increase in their term and cumulative GPAs, and are retained at a higher rate, compared to students who choose not to participate.

Table 5.17. Probation Recovery Program Results

Year/Semester		Participation Level	Total Students	Avg. Change Term GPA	Avg. Change Cum. GPA	Retention by Participation
2012-2013	Fall	Fully	7	1.37	0.47	85%
		Not at all	6	0.82	0.04	50%
	Spring	Fully	14	1.19	0.48	93%
		Not at all	11	0.66	0.07	36%
2013-2014	Fall	Fully	13	0.92	0.21	85%
		Not at all	5	0.70	0.05	60%
	Spring	Fully	23	0.80	0.36	83%
		Not at all	13	0.66	0.13	54%
2014-2015	Fall	Fully	14	0.99	0.29	86%
		Not at all	8	0.18	-0.12	25%
	Spring	Fully	21	0.71	0.25	81%
		Not at all	10	0.42	-0.07	20%

The probation recovery program has been highly successful.

Primarily through its Help Desk, the office of IT Services maintains vital support for students and their use of wireless networking, e-mail, printing, media services, and online security, along with more specialized services. IT Services is responsible for supporting both students and staff in functions such as registration, bill pay, housing registration, software for student organizations, and career services, and also supports the numerous locations of the Accelerated Degree Programs. In 2015, Albright seniors responding to the 2015 HEDS Senior Survey were more satisfied with computer services and support than comparison seniors (scoring 3.1 out of 4, vs. 2.8 at peer schools).

As an institution that participates in the Yellow Ribbon program, Albright is able to provide eligible veterans or family members with funding from the VA and the institution up to the full cost of tuition and fees. A majority of our veterans and dependents of veterans qualify for this under the Post 9/11 GI Bill, since they have served since 2001. Total enrollment of students using veterans' benefits ranges from 40 to 50 at any particular time, including students in the traditional and ADP programs. ADP was recently named among the 2016 Military Friendly Schools by Victory Media. In 2015, Albright was awarded a grant to bring in an Americorps VISTA position to campus to provide community outreach and social support to veterans returning to college life. Funding for the 2016-2017 Americorps VISTA was recently approved by the Pennsylvania Campus Compact, allowing Albright to continue providing services to this important student population. The College is currently implementing Slate software, which, among other improvements, will allow us to identify and track veteran students through the admission process.

Although Albright is a largely residential college, a portion of local students in the traditional day program currently choose to commute from home. Commuter-specific sessions are held during freshman and transfer orientations to address the needs of these students. Commuters have access to a designated lounge in Selwyn Hall where they can rent a locker, use a basic kitchen, and relax between classes. There is a commuter student organization, and it has an official liaison to the Student Government Association.

The International Student Office (ISO) provides a special orientation to international students with the support of trained student "I-POPs" (International Peer Orientation Persons), who are current international students serving as on-call peer advisors to new international students. Once the semester begins, the ISO fields all international student questions and concerns. Its staff consults best practices of the Student and Exchange Visitor Program sponsored by the U.S. government, of NAFSA, CAS, and of the Association of International Educators. International students informally report satisfaction with their "one-stop shopping" in the ISO; however, more formal periodic assessment is needed and has begun in the form of student satisfaction surveys in spring and fall 2016. International students participate in academic advising with a faculty advisor just as all students do.

### **External Assessment of Student Services**

Albright students regularly assess the College's support services on several different external survey instruments, some of which have been referenced above. In the 2013 AICUP First Year Student Survey, 77.6% of respondents felt the College provided help in improving study skills, 70.7% felt helped in managing their time, and 85.9% felt helped in understanding professors' expectations. All



three of these skills are supported by the ALC and the Writing Center and are available to all students. On the 2014 National Survey of Student Engagement, the responses of Albright freshmen and seniors were comparable to those of peer institutions in rating student support; Albright seniors rated their academic support more highly than those at peer schools. In the 2015 HEDS Senior Survey, Albright College seniors were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with the tutorial help or other academic assistance; seniors reported feeling generally satisfied and were significantly more satisfied than students at peer institutions. In addition, seniors reported feeling at least generally satisfied in 22 out of 28 campus services and facilities, and were significantly more satisfied than students at peer institutions with the Registrar's Office, career services, computer services, and student health services (HEDS report, figures 3 and 4). A trend of improvement can be observed for many items, especially ethnic/racial diversity, computer services and support, social life on campus, and classroom facilities. The opening in 2014 of a one-stop Student Services Center for the Registrar, Financial Aid, and Student Accounts was well received.

Most student services support student learning, especially the ALC, Writing Center, Library, and IT Services. IT Services, for example, does not articulate learning outcomes, but provides a tool called Atomic Learning that provides students with 24/7 access to educational videos that support learning outcomes in various departments. Other student services support important needs of students, but are not necessarily linked to learning outcomes. For example, the International Students Office manages the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System, assists with international student orientation, and advises the International Student Association (ISA) and the Cultural Awareness Relationships (CARE) program. The Gable Health Center, Counseling Center, Financial Aid, Public Safety, and Student Affairs do not articulate learning outcomes but meet vital student needs. Articulating learning outcomes for support areas is an area warranting further exploration by the College.

Directors of student services programs all have relevant professional experience. The Director of Public Safety has a BS in Crime and Justice and History and significant professional experience. All other directors have graduate degrees in disciplines that are relevant to their services. Directors of the Counseling Center and Gable Health Center also maintain appropriate Pennsylvania licenses. The ALC and Writing Center, for example, are both certified by the College Reading and Learning Association, which has tutor training requirements to maintain certification.

## **Athletics**

Albright competes in NCAA Division III. The Athletic Department offers a vibrant array of opportunities, fielding 23 of the 24 varsity sports sponsored by our Middle Atlantic Conference (MAC), in addition to a cheerleading team. There are eleven male sports and twelve female sports. Cheerleading is a co-ed activity. The only MAC-sponsored sport that Albright does not offer is wrestling, which was cancelled after several years of an empty roster. Recently, leaders of the Middle Atlantic Conference (MAC) have discussed adding men's volleyball as a conference sport. The Athletic staff is assessing that possible addition, including needs and budget implications, along with its recruitment potential. The Athletic staff assesses the College's sports offerings annually, considering trends at other MAC institutions and in high school participation. In the 2015 HEDS Senior Survey, seniors rated the contribution of intercollegiate athletics to learning and personal development more highly than peer seniors (HEDS table 6). Albright athletes have academic success comparable to their non-athlete peers, as evidenced in the most recent MAC Athletic Conference academic survey, which shows that Albright athletes graduate at a higher rate than their non-athlete peers.

Table 5.18. Athlete Academic Performance: Graduation Rates

	Albright	MAC
Male Athletes	57.1%	57.9%
Male Non-Athletes	42.9%	55.1%
Female Athletes	70.2%	77.4%
Female Non-Athletes	62.7%	64.1%
All Athletes	61.9%	65.7%
All Non-Athletes	56.2%	60.6%

At the end of the academic year each sport is analyzed using a dashboard “scorecard,” one for men's sports and one for women's sports. This looks at the satisfaction of the student-athletes in each program, athletic success of the program, academic achievements of the student-athletes, facilities, and staffing. This analysis is completed each year and helps to make sure the College is offering sports that are appropriate and a program that satisfies the student-athletes while promoting their success.

## **Co-curricular Programming for Students**

In addition to athletics, Albright offers more than 80 co-curricular programs, including student government, service organizations, faith-based organizations, arts organizations, special-interest clubs, fraternities and sororities, and more. A-Link software, adopted in 2014, has helped to provide access to opportunities and to gather and analyze data for co-curricular activities, such as roster sizes, participation, and activity. A-Link is a valuable source not only for prospective students to consider student activities, but also to make sure the College is meeting the needs of the current students.

Overall, Albright has an active student body. The wealth of campus programs devoted to artistic pursuits contributed to Albright's placement on *Newsweek's* list of "25 most artistic colleges" of 2011. The leadership opportunities provided by our diverse athletic and co-curricular offerings support the mission of the College to "educate the leader in each student."

### **Privacy of Student Information**

Albright College is proactive about protecting the privacy of student information. The College policies are set by the Cabinet and managed by the Information Technology Services office. Policies are thoroughly presented on the "Information Security and Data Privacy" section of the ITS website. Each new Albright employee goes through a mandatory information security training session which stresses the privacy of student information. The IT Services office regularly sends out e-mail notices to the campus reminding everyone of data security and privacy procedures. Albright requires strong passwords, and students set their own through a secure interface that allows them access to email, Self-Service (for registration, bill pay, etc.), and the learning management system Moodle. The College's data systems are regularly audited by external consultants for their security and received a grade of "A" on the most recent intrusion test. In response to recommendations from such audits, the College implemented Nessus, a vulnerability assessment server that sends alerts to the IT infrastructure team as needed, and replaced its traditional IP TCP/UDP port-based firewall with a new Unified Threat Management firewall system.

The College's data access policy stipulates different levels of access for what is considered public information, sensitive data, and restricted data. A group of College officials designated as Data Stewards, appointed by senior management, meet regularly to discuss security, process, access, and stewardship issues surrounding student information. The Data Stewards are working on strengthening the data breach notification process. They are considering the appointment of an Information Security Officer to help manage these issues. Information on data management and access policies, including the role of data stewards, can be found on the ITS website. A dedicated section of the ITS website provides access to links on information security and data privacy, including a reporting system for IT security incidents.

Albright complies with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 regarding confidentiality of student records. The Registrar's Office is the primary steward of FERPA records, and information is available on this office's web page. Information is also available in the student handbook. Student FERPA information is now collected online, and all changes to the FERPA form

are tracked electronically. Relevant flags are applied to the student record in the Student Information System. Individual offices have procedures that respond to FERPA flags. The Gable Health Center observes federal regulations about the privacy of student medical information, and its home page addresses confidentiality.

### **Student Complaints and Grievances**

Some areas of the College have well-articulated and publicized procedures, such as the Accelerated Degree Programs and Office of Community Standards. Others have informal procedures or defer to the College's ombudsmen policy, which is outlined in the student handbook. Because areas of the College have varied in the way they collect and use data on student complaints and grievances, the College recently implemented a unified web page addressing student complaint resolution, modeled on an existing ADP page. This also includes a link to a web-based form a student may submit, which is routed directly to a designated administrator and tracks response. An overall guidance page for complaints links to the unified page.

Academic complaints, grievances, and appeals are handled through the office of Academic Affairs. Policies and procedures are outlined in the College Catalog and in the *Compass*, the student handbook. While policies are clearly stated, complaints and grievances of an academic nature are not uniformly tracked. In both the FERPA information and complaint resolution pages cited above, students are advised of their right to file complaints.

The Academic Appeals Board, comprised of five elected faculty members and five students appointed by the Student Government Association, hears student appeals of grades and charges of academic dishonesty. The Enrollment Management Committee, comprised of faculty members, with *ex officio* members of staff and administration, hears student appeals of academic dismissals, academic forgiveness, and graduation requirements. This committee also hears appeals from students wishing for disability reasons to substitute the study of foreign culture for the graduation requirement of foreign language study. Students seeking this substitution must work first with the Disability Services Office, in compliance with the policy for this accommodation.

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Albright College successfully recruits, admits, supports and retains its students. In the traditional undergraduate program, enrollments and retention have risen after the College implemented a financial aid policy of meeting 100% of institutionally defined need. This new policy is on track but

requires careful ongoing analysis. Graduation rates remain a challenge; after dropping in 2006 they have not fully recovered, despite some gains. In the Adult Degree Programs, enrollment has been strong but fell in the past few years, reflecting national trends. Both programs have a diverse population, especially the traditional program, in which 40% of students identify as non-Caucasian; students as a whole voice appreciation for the diverse and inclusive climate. Residential life thrives, supported by over 80 campus organizations and 23 Division III teams. A four-year residency requirement was recently introduced, in concert with construction of a new private residential facility that will be managed by the College. Student orientation and support services are strong at Albright, including systematic outreach to at-risk students and a highly successful probation recovery program. Students are satisfied with academic advising, but the College recognizes the need for improvement in professional development for faculty and evaluation of advising. Policies for student integrity, conduct, and appeals are clear and effectively administered, but a more systematic and centralized approach to tracking complaints is needed, especially in the traditional program.

### **Recommendations**

1. Educate the College community about various means available to communicate complaints and grievances, especially the new student grievance forms, and ensure appropriate tracking and response (Standard 9)

### **Suggestions**

1. In order to improve retention and persistence, improve the systematic collection and analysis of information from and about students
2. Take steps to implement recommendations from surveys on classroom space and technology, including the Instructional Space Utilization Study, to enhance the teaching and learning environment and better support enrollment
3. Improve the goals, training, and assessment of student academic advising

## CHAPTER 6

### THE ALBRIGHT COLLEGE FACULTY

This chapter addresses *Characteristics of Excellence* Standard 10 (Faculty) and was first drafted by self-study working group number five, co-chaired by two faculty members, one the chair of History and a former chair of the faculty, and one the chair of the Art Department. This chapter addresses the qualifications of Albright's faculty and their active guidance of the curricular, instructional, and research activities of the College. The College meets this Standard and offers the recommendations and suggestions listed at the end of this chapter.

#### **Qualifications**

The College employs a highly qualified faculty. Albright's faculty members are dedicated teachers and mentors, active scholars, and committed to the mission of the College. As of our Fall 2016 census, the College has 120 full-time and 80 part-time faculty members. 77% of full-time faculty members have terminal degrees, a number that has ranged between 77% and 83% over the past five years, and an increase over the previous Self-Study period. For 2015-2016 and 2016-2017, four visiting professors also taught at the College in foreign languages, in addition to a year-long senior fellow funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities in 2015-2016. Credentials for the top candidates are verified after the on-campus interviews; HR performs additional verification once the offer is made. All faculty members must submit *curriculum vitae* to HR and then submit updated CVs to the Provost every year. Adjuncts are generally not hired through a national search but also have their credentials vetted by the hiring department and HR. Policies and procedures for hiring part-time faculty members are outlined in the Department Chairs Handbook (section III.K.2). A terminal degree is required for assistant professor rank and above, and a masters is the minimum for any hire, including part-time.

While the College has achieved full gender parity among faculty, still less than 18% of full-time faculty and 10% of adjuncts identify as "minority," figures not dramatically different than five years ago (13% and 6%, respectively). Albright has a diverse student body and strives to hire and retain a faculty that reflects society in general and our student body in particular, but faculty diversity needs improvement, as at many liberal arts colleges. Our faculty search guidelines require that "all searches must be conducted with a firm and aggressive commitment to improving diversity among our faculty. Diversity should be viewed as an attribute equal in importance to the candidate's contributions in terms of academic credentials and experiences." Each search committee includes a trained affirmative action representative. The College posts jobs in a variety of places nationally, including minority publications and HERC (Higher Education Recruiting Consortium), in an effort to diversify the hiring pool.

Additional diversity and inclusion training for faculty and staff could be useful. The College understands that our faculty’s diversity is an unachieved goal that affects our community and student success.

New full-time faculty participate in a full-day orientation before the beginning of the semester and then a series of meetings throughout the year organized around topics of interest (such as Albright’s governance structure or how to put together the end-of-the-year evaluation binder). New full-time faculty also meet with the Provost once a month to read about and discuss issues of pedagogy. These programs take the place of the faculty service requirement for all first-year faculty.

### **Faculty Roles and Responsibilities**

The College recognizes, as stated at the beginning of the Faculty Handbook, the expertise of the faculty in judging the quality of faculty performance in teaching, scholarship, and service to the College and in overseeing the curriculum. The roles and responsibilities of the faculty are outlined in the Handbook and in individual contract letters, which are issued and signed annually. Revision of the Faculty Handbook is overseen by the Professional Council; the latest version was approved by the faculty and then the trustees in October 2015.

### **Teaching, Scholarship, Service**

Of the faculty’s primary responsibilities, Albright makes teaching a priority, and unsurprisingly faculty members spend the majority of their time engaged with some aspect of teaching. In an internal survey administered in 2016, the full-time faculty members who responded (n=60) indicated that within a typical school year, the majority (62%) of their time is dedicated to teaching, followed by service (16%), research (14%), and advising (8%). Faculty evaluation will be addressed below, but with regard to overall student perceptions of teaching effectiveness, end-of-term course evaluations indicate that satisfaction is high. The “Instructor Summary” in that instrument averages 17 relevant items on a 1-5 scale, and College-wide averages show that even first-quartile ratings are well above 4.0, shown below:

Table 6.1. Course Evaluation Results: “Instructor Summary” College Mean, 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Quartiles

YEAR (Fall term)	1 <sup>st</sup> Quartile Mean		3 <sup>rd</sup> Quartile Mean	
	Gen. Studies	Major Courses	Gen. Studies	Major Courses
2010	4.31	4.34	4.64	4.76
2011	4.25	4.39	4.65	4.77
2012	4.34	4.44	4.67	4.78
2013	4.28	4.41	4.64	4.78
2014	4.29	4.36	4.69	4.76
2015	4.29	4.34	4.67	4.79

Faculty scholarship is an expectation that complements the emphasis on teaching and accomplishments are shared with the faculty through the monthly Provost Bulletin. The Faculty Handbook (IV.B.6) defines scholarship and creative activity in broad terms, also including “student involvement in faculty scholarship or supervision of student scholarship,” which is consonant with the high value Albright places on undergraduate research. The Handbook also notes that “the scope and level of resources available to faculty also are to be considered” when assessing productivity. What constitutes appropriate scholarship in a given discipline remains a live discussion (see below).

Faculty service is both a strong point and an area of faculty concern; the large amount of service undertaken illustrates the commitment of the faculty to a strong community and strong governance, yet is also unevenly distributed and raises concern of potential “burnout.” The service expectation is straightforward enough -- one committee assignment per year -- but many faculty members do much more in trying to fill identified service needs, especially in smaller academic divisions. The Faculty Executive Committee oversees faculty committee assignments. See below for more comment on recommendations to lighten service loads.

### **Advising**

Advising and student satisfaction are addressed above in Chapter Five; as stated there, Albright has a faculty-only advising system for the traditional undergraduate program, ensuring access to mentorship by full-time faculty members. (Students in the Accelerated Degree Programs are advised by ADP staff and faculty.) The Registrar collaborates with department chairs in assigning advisees to each department based on the major(s) selected by the student or, in the case of undeclared students, to other advising faculty. Students pursuing minors are also assigned a minor advisor. Allocation of advisees occurs in different ways, depending on preferences of the department chair – the Registrar can divide students among the full-time faculty, the chair may assign advisees based on his/her own discretion, or the department may come to a group decision. The average advising load across departments over the past nine years is 23.5, trending upward in the last two years (28 and 29). Advising is not evenly distributed across the campus, in part due to Albright’s system of combined majors, which assigns students an adviser in each major. Faculty members in departments with fewer majors advise undecided students. As noted above, a 2016 internal survey of faculty indicated that on average faculty members spend just under 10% of their time on advising (which is construed narrowly, perhaps too much so, and likely does not include other time interacting with students). Faculty orientation includes sessions on aspects of advising, including “developmental” approaches; and faculty are highly engaged in the advising process more broadly construed. However, as noted in



Chapter Five, while student satisfaction with advising is good, the College recognizes a need for more training and evaluation in its advising system.

## **Curriculum**

Consistent with the principles of strong shared governance, the faculty controls the development of individual courses, as well as major, minor, and general education requirements. After approval by the academic department, proposals for curricular changes flow through faculty committees in well-established processes. The curriculum approval process routes course-level changes through the faculty Curriculum Development Committee and program-level changes through the faculty Educational Policy Council (EPC). The full faculty, Provost, and Board of Trustees must approve new full or combined majors and general education program changes. The Faculty Executive Committee serves as the gateway for business that goes before the full faculty, and can send proposals back to EPC for further consideration before forwarding to the faculty for discussion and vote. For more information, especially on the new general education curriculum process, see Chapter Seven.

Course curricula are maintained at the departmental level, led by the chair, and involve yearly reviews of individual instructors' offerings as well as end-of-year reports. Departments retain control of course assessment, but are expected to provide evidence in the annual reports that they are evaluating student-learning outcomes and addressing needs for improvements (see sample reports noted in Chapter Four). Students evaluate their experience in each course, and while those forms become part of individual faculty performance portfolio, chairs are privy to those responses as well, and both instructor and chair can use this as a source of information to improve individual courses.

Finally, program-level curriculum is reviewed and maintained through periodic academic program review (APR) under the joint leadership of the EPC and academic dean (mentioned earlier in relation to governance in chapter three). The APR process includes both internal and external review from faculty peers. It provides an opportunity for participatory involvement in academic program development and improvement at the departmental level, and curriculum review is always an important part of this process. The APR has resulted in curricular improvements for several departments. The APR process has also provoked some dissatisfaction regarding the extra, uncompensated workload entailed and occasional disagreements with external peer analyses or even within individual departments, but the process has been successful overall. In a recent survey assessment of the APR process among faculty and administrators involved, the majority found it both helpful (self-reflection, external reviewers, leverage for new curriculum and faculty) and challenging (overly complicated, requiring extra time and work, availability of data).

## Faculty Evaluation

As noted in Chapter Two, faculty evaluation, both tenure-track and non-tenure-track, proceeds on a set calendar and follows policies articulated in the Faculty Handbook and Faculty Evaluation and Performance Compensation System guide. As communicated in the Handbook (section IV), all applicants for tenure are judged only with respect to the following: teaching excellence; scholarship, creative achievement, and professional activity; and service to the College community. Albright faculty members spend the majority of their time teaching, and this is also the most important criterion for tenure and promotion. Faculty members must strike a balance between scholarship and service to the College according to her/his interests and abilities, and while both are important to the College, neither should be done at the expense of teaching excellence, nor can either serve as a substitute for teaching excellence. In the 2013 *Chronicle of Higher Education* “Great Colleges to Work For” survey, faculty were asked whether “Teaching is appropriately recognized in the evaluation and promotion process”; 58% agreed or strongly agreed, 21% sometimes agreed/disagreed, and 21% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Some of this disagreement may be explained by the perception that independent studies, thesis advisement, and undergraduate research are reflected in the evaluation process but not given their due weight or compensation. Also, there is no single modality for assessing teaching. Student course evaluations address this to some degree and are required for each course (see further remarks above in this chapter and in the chapter on assessment), and peer evaluation of teaching, typically by department chairs, is part of the annual evaluation process. In “topline” results for the more recently administered 2016 version of the *Chronicle* survey, faculty scored “teaching environment” questions 13% higher than in 2013.

Tenure-track faculty are evaluated their first, third, and fifth year by their department chair and the Provost; in their second and fourth year, they undergo a review with the Advisory Committee on Rank and Tenure (ACRT), in order to prepare and counsel them during the probationary period leading to tenure and to identify early any areas that need improvement. The process allows maximum input from multiple constituencies and identifies problem areas early enough in the tenure process to allow professors to seek further professional development and make positive changes. The COACHE survey from 2012-13 explored the tenure and promotion processes, and overall faculty ranked “tenure policies” and “tenure clarity” similarly as our peers. However, promotion processes and criteria were an area of concern for associate professors in particular, and clarifying scholarship criteria for tenure has been a continuing topic of discussion (see more below). Processes to address adverse decisions on promotion and tenure, contract status, and grievances are clearly stated in the Faculty Handbook. Appeals of adverse decisions related to faculty employment are heard by a Faculty Appeals Committee

consisting of five full-time tenured faculty members representing all academic divisions. (See Faculty Governance Guide section V.F for this committee and Faculty Handbook section V-VII for grievance procedures.)

The guidelines for annual review for full-time faculty outside the tenure process, for both tenured and non-tenure-track faculty members, are stated in the Faculty Evaluation and Performance Compensation System guide. In the document, specific guidelines for what constitutes satisfactory and meritorious qualifications are outlined for teaching, scholarship/professional activity, and service to the College community. The interpretation and demonstration of achievement of these criteria, especially scholarship and service, may differ depending upon discipline. The faculty performance evaluation system has not been reviewed since 2006-2007, and this overall issue is on the agenda of the faculty Professional Council (PC), which in spring 2016 formed an ad hoc committee in collaboration with the new Provost. Relatedly, and as part of the PC review, there is widespread dissatisfaction among the faculty with the how the merit pay system has been interpreted and applied, which resulted in the Provost suspending merit raises, with the consent of the faculty and the President, while the task force does its work. The process for evaluation of adjuncts, on the other hand, is not clearly defined. The ad hoc task force referenced above will address the merit system, the cumbersome nature of the current faculty evaluation process, and other concerns related to the faculty evaluation system.

### **Support for Professional Activity**

The faculty has multiple avenues to obtain support for professional activities, and support is relatively robust for a college of Albright's resources. Professional development is addressed in section VIII of the Faculty Handbook. The PC oversees the awarding of funds and related policies, and procedures are readily available on the website. The PC's budget has increased 16.5% since 2007. Each full-time member of the faculty has access to \$450, which is automatic and requires no application, but is an amount that has not changed in many years. In addition, each full-time faculty member can apply for up to \$2,500 per year (\$3,000 for international travel), at various funding levels: 100% expenses for conference presentation, 75% for research costs, and 60% for attending a conference. Part-time faculty who have taught at least eighteen courses for the College and are currently teaching are eligible for up to \$1,000 in annual funding. In the *Chronicle* "Great Colleges to Work For" survey, support for and recognition of scholarly and creative projects ranked high.

The PC also oversees a summer grant program for a for research or teaching; these \$2,000 awards cover time, not expenses. These grants are highly competitive (i.e., a recent round resulted in 5 out of 14

applications funded). On average, two awards are given for teaching-related activities such as course development and three to five for research. Pre-tenured faculty members are currently given priority over established faculty members for these research grants, which may help smooth their path to tenure but has raised some concern about opportunities for mid-level faculty. In addition, the College has more established avenues for the support of professional and research activities than for development of pedagogy. Since faculty members spend the majority of their time in teaching-related activities, and teaching is the primary criterion for tenure, more support for pedagogy development is desirable.

In addition to professional development funding, Albright has a very strong program supporting collaborative student-faculty research projects called ACRE (Albright Creative Research Experience). These grants fund collaborative projects during the summer (10 weeks) and over the College's January interim term. During the summer, faculty receive \$2,800 for 40 hours weekly of collaborative work (a full ACRE) or \$1,400 for 20 hours weekly of collaborative work (a half ACRE); during Interim the faculty amounts are \$1200 and \$600. Students also receive a stipend to participate.

Sabbatical leaves are available to the full-time tenured faculty for study and research or approved travel that is shown to be of advantage to both the College and the faculty member. Faculty members are eligible for a sabbatical leave after a minimum of six years of full-time teaching, and then successive increments of six years; faculty members may take one semester at full pay or a full year at half pay. Sabbaticals are not automatic and require a proposal and post-sabbatical presentation to the campus community. Professional leaves are also possible for "professional development . . . that will contribute to the enhancement of the faculty member's professional growth in teaching, scholarship, creative achievement, and/or professional service."

### **Adjunct Faculty**

As noted above, the College employs 83 part-time faculty. Part-time faculty are most widely employed in the Accelerated Degree Programs. In the day program over the past five years, the departments that depend the most on adjunct teaching are Classical Languages (62.5%), English (57.1%), and Education (52.8%). The following table provides an overview of part-time teaching:

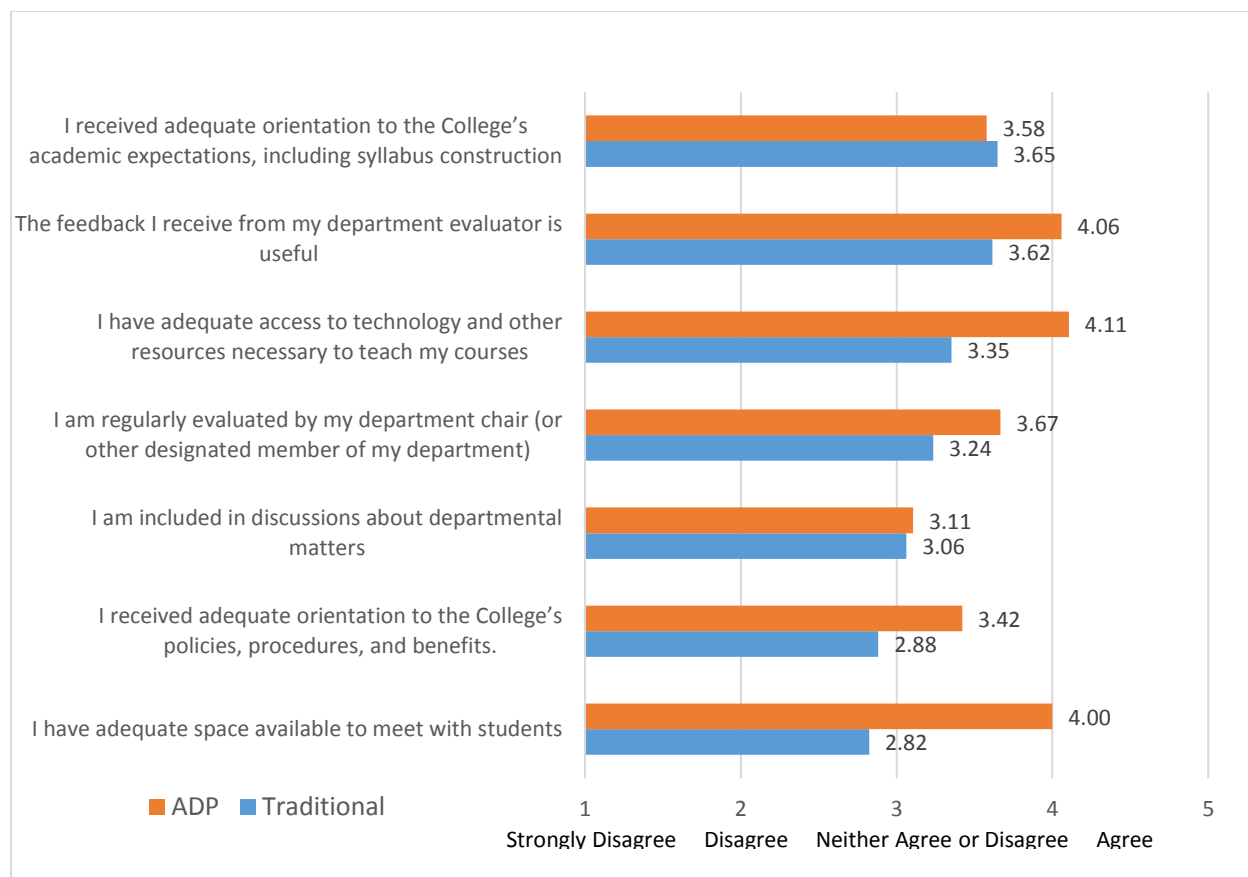
Table 6.2. Percent of Courses Taught by FT Faculty

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
<b><i>Traditional Day Program</i></b>						
Humanities	69%	69%	74%	80%	68%	69%
Natural Science	88%	89%	84%	84%	84%	91%
Social Sciences	95%	91%	85%	74%	74%	75%
<i>All traditional day courses</i>	82%	78%	78%	79%	73%	76%
<b><i>Accelerated Degree Program</i></b>						
Degree Completion (Major)	37%	42%	42%	43%	47%	52%
Degree Start	27%	33%	27%	32%	29%	24%

New adjunct faculty in ADP attend a half-day orientation which includes information on basic policies and procedures, instruction on credit hour requirements and equivalents, best practices, and curriculum for their courses. In addition, each faculty member spends one hour with the ADP Moodle Administrator. Orientation for adjunct faculty in the day program is not formalized but left to the discretion of the department chair. There are guidelines in the Department Chairs Handbook, and the Faculty Handbook contains Responsibilities of Part-Time Faculty. Responses to a recent survey of adjuncts on orientation to academic expectations provided were satisfactory but not strong (about 3.6 out of 5 for both the traditional and ADP programs), and responses on orientation to policies and procedures rated them low, especially among adjuncts teaching primarily in the day program (2.9 out of 5), reflecting the College's lack of clear and consistent adjunct policies.

A recent survey of adjunct faculty sheds light on several aspects of adjunct faculty work at Albright, as seen in the table below:

Figure 6.1. Adjunct Faculty Survey



The survey looked at orientation, resources and space, evaluation, and input into departmental matters. In all but one area (orientation to academic expectations, which is roughly comparable), ADP adjuncts express higher levels of satisfaction. Other areas of concern, according to the survey, were the space available for adjuncts in the traditional program, classroom resources, and the usefulness of the evaluation process. Taken together, the data suggest that the more formalized policies and procedures for ADP adjuncts benefit them and should be replicated in the day program.

### Albright's Academic Workplace

As noted earlier in relation to governance, academic freedom is guaranteed for faculty as both a right and responsibility. The Board of Trustees "Code of Conduct" requires that trustees "accept the spirit of academic freedom and shared governance as fundamental characteristics of College governance," and the Faculty Handbook (I.A) affirms individual academic and artistic freedom as the foundation of our faculty community to be exercised with good judgment; the Faculty Governance Guide incorporates the AAUP Statement on Professional Ethics, which also addresses academic freedom as a fundamental right and responsibility. In the internal 2016 survey of faculty mentioned earlier, all but

one respondent who expressed an opinion voiced some level of agreement that they “have proper autonomy and support when presenting potentially controversial material in the classroom” (item 6).

The Albright College faculty enjoys the community and atmosphere made possible at a small liberal arts college, and the entire campus has made efforts to improve the College as a place to work. Specifically, with regard to faculty, there have been significant efforts to explore and improve the quality of faculty work-life. In the fall of 2009, the College was awarded a grant from the Sloan Foundation, administered by the American Council on Education, in order to enhance career flexibility and support in the lives of tenured and tenure-track faculty members; this grant also permitted investigation into work-life balance issues, and measurements of faculty satisfaction in their day-to-day interactions. Some important changes were made – such as policies on tenure-clock stoppage, shared positions, family leave, and higher salary increases with promotion – but other analyses and recommendations made by the Sloan faculty task force continue to be relevant, for example streamlining committees, re-defining what qualifies as service, calculating faculty teaching loads more equitably, and revising the process for keeping the Faculty Handbook up-to-date. Faculty members and the new Provost have expressed interest in reviving those discussions.

The prevalence of teaching overloads is part of the overall picture of faculty life at Albright; 43% of full-time faculty taught overloads in 2015-2016, in either one or both semesters (see Dashboard, p. 2). This, along with the related fact that 73% of courses in the traditional undergraduate program were taught by full-time faculty members that year, compared to 82% five years ago, suggests that more full-time faculty may be needed to cover the curriculum if Albright is to keep its full-time faculty at the forefront of the education it provides. The data concerning both adjunct teaching and overloads can be used for the strategic hiring of more full-time faculty, subject to available funding.

Maintaining competitive salaries has been a recurring faculty concern. Increases in compensation have not occurred consistently due to constrained resources, even apart from the questions about evaluation and merit policies described above. The College’s goal is parity with the median salary levels in rank for the Mideast region of colleges and universities that are members of the Council of Independent Colleges. Currently we lag at all levels, slightly for the associate rank but more so at the assistant and full ranks (see Albright 2015-16 Faculty Salaries report).

Several surveys have also explored the quality of Albright faculty’s workplace, including *The Chronicle of Higher Education’s* 2013 and 2016 “Great Colleges to Work For” surveys and the recent internal survey of faculty. Some of the positives and negatives have been discussed throughout this chapter

and in Chapter Two above in relation to governance – an appreciation of autonomy in teaching, flexibility in scheduling, and the work of department chairs, and dissatisfaction with the role of administration in shared governance, the atmosphere of administration-faculty relations, and sometimes inflammatory language used in faculty email communications. This last item addresses the question of faculty collegiality, a subjective dimension of work-life yet a key one, since the climate and character of faculty interaction is crucial to delivering a well-functioning curriculum for students.

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Albright College employs a highly qualified faculty to support its mission. Academic freedom and oversight of curriculum are the unquestioned basis of faculty life at Albright. The traditional day program has a student-faculty ratio of 14:1, and about 75% of classes are taught by full-time faculty (more if English composition and education classes are excluded). The Accelerated Degree Programs rely more on adjuncts, but still have more full-time faculty than peer programs (ten); in major cohorts almost half the courses are taught by full-time faculty. While gender parity has been achieved in the faculty, true racial and ethnic diversity is still a challenge. Professional development resources at Albright are relatively strong. Student satisfaction with quality of both teaching and advising is high, although a Teaching and Learning Center would more strongly promote faculty development in these areas. The faculty evaluation system is functional, but not ideal. Areas of improvement include policies regarding adjuncts and faculty load generally, promotion and merit expectations, and definition and recognition of service. Faculty salaries are below desired benchmarks. Albright's faculty community has benefitted from changes implemented pursuant to a Sloan Foundation grant (job shares, tenure clock stoppages, family leave, phased retirement); the Sloan report continues to provide a framework for further progress in faculty flexibility and work-life balance.

### **Recommendations**

1. Revise the non-tenure-track and tenure-track faculty evaluation systems to clarify expectations with regard to workload, scholarship, and service
2. Improve definitions of faculty workload and the distribution of faculty committee work, relying in part on previous discussions funded by the Sloan Foundation
3. Review, improve, and communicate processes for hiring, evaluating, supporting, and recognizing adjunct faculty



## **Suggestions**

1. Develop goals and implement a plan to improve faculty compensation, including that of part-time faculty, with reference to national and regional benchmarks
2. Build upon the current Teaching and Learning Committee to create a formal Teaching and Learning Center to support excellence in faculty teaching
3. Improve procedures for regularly updating the Faculty Handbook to keep it accurate and current

## CHAPTER 7

### EDUCATING ALBRIGHT'S STUDENTS

This chapter addresses *Characteristics of Excellence* Standards 11 (Educational Offerings), 12 (General Education), and 13 (Related Educational Activities). It was first drafted by working group six, co-chaired by two senior faculty members, one a former chair of Sociology and member of the Faculty Executive Committee and the other the chair of Biology. Our educational programs confirm that Albright College fulfills its mission to educate all students in the liberal arts and sciences, inspiring leaders and fostering a commitment to service and life-long learning. The three fundamental goals of the 2012 Strategic Plan bear directly on our ability to educate students, and in particular the goals to “foster academic excellence” and “strengthen our learning community” light a direct path into Albright’s classrooms and programs. The College meets these Standards and offers the recommendations and suggestions listed at the end of this chapter.

#### **Educational Offerings**

##### **Degree Programs**

Albright offers approximately fifty majors and co-majors of traditional undergraduate study ranging from accounting to women’s and gender studies, leading to a B.S. or B.A. A typical major in the undergraduate day program consists of thirteen to seventeen courses, which include at least one 400-level course designed to synthesize the learning in the major and produce a significant final project. Students may also select from approximately twenty different minors, which require them to complete five or six courses, depending on the minor. Students can also elect to combine two majors of seven courses each. Combined majors (or co-majors) require a 400-level course in each of the two disciplines. Academically strong students also have the flexibility to declare an Individualized Study Program (ISP) by the end of sophomore year, which allows pursuit of a major not outlined in the college catalog. The College places an emphasis on interdisciplinary education, and over 60% of Albright students graduate with combined majors, in addition to those who pursue an inherently interdisciplinary major such as psychobiology, digital communications, or child and family studies.

It should be noted that Albright uses a course-unit system in its traditional undergraduate program, requiring 32 course units minimum to graduate, with each course unit the equivalent of four credits. Classes that meet only three hours per week are required to state explicitly on the syllabus what constitutes their “fourth hour of quality.” This requirement is described in the course and program development section of the faculty resources pages of the website.

Transfer students are required to take at least sixteen courses at Albright. This includes all of their major requirements (barring an exception made by a department). Non-traditional learners in the Accelerated Degree Programs (discussed below) can transfer up to seventy-eight credits towards a bachelor's degree; however, these students must take all courses in their major at Albright, as well as a small part of the general studies requirement, ensuring a sixteen-course minimum to obtain an Albright College undergraduate degree. The graduate degree in Education requires a student to obtain thirty-six credits and complete a thesis, research project, or comprehensive examination, while allowing nine approved graduate credits to transfer towards the graduate degree. These transfer policies are clear, consistent, and readily available, as discussed in Chapter Five.

The graduate program in Education awards the master of arts and master of science degrees in General Education (which includes Secondary Education content areas). Albright also welcomes post-baccalaureate candidates seeking certification only. Degree candidates may pursue teacher certification, while certified teachers in the program may seek only the advanced degree. The program requires a minimum of 36 credits on the credit system, that is, 3 credits per course. Building upon and continuing Albright's interdisciplinary tradition, the master's degree includes a liberal arts strand of three courses. The program is small, and while there is no concern over its quality, enrollments are a concern.

The Accelerated Degree Programs (ADP) provide another pathway to an Albright degree for students twenty-one or older with three years of work experience (which may include parenting or volunteer work); currently, the average age is 33. It was developed and implemented in 1997 to address the increasing educational demand by non-traditional students. ADP offers a cohort-based learning structure for each major, while also offering accelerated general studies courses. While some general studies courses may be taken concurrently with the major, the accelerated nature of ADP makes this difficult, and it is not encouraged. ADP requires fifteen courses in each of its seven majors (several of which are interdisciplinary, such as Computer Information Systems & Management and Digital Communications), sequentially taught and leading to a senior capstone course. ADP does not currently offer minors or allow for the creation of combined majors. ADP courses award 3 credits each.

ADP currently maintains nine approved additional instructional locations, consisting of two "additional locations" and seven "other instructional sites" in Pennsylvania. ADP does not currently operate any active instructional locations outside the state. Beginning in January 2013, ADP did

operate one out-of-state instructional site location, in Mesa, Arizona, but closed this site in 2015. Of the seven “other instructional sites,” five reside on the campuses of community colleges.

ADP maintains a separate student handbook for ADP students, as an addendum to the Catalog and *Compass*, to ensure policies and procedures include the needs of non-traditional learners, such as on-demand online tutoring support, prior learning assessment, and competency-based credit options such as the CLEP and DANTES programs. The last two distributions of the Ruffalo Noel Levitz Adult Learning Inventory (see page 35 of PDF) (ALI) to ADP students showed that ADP had comparable overall student satisfaction compared to national four-year adult learners who were surveyed.

Table 7.1. Ruffalo Noel Levitz Adult Learning Inventory Institutional Summary Averages, 2014 and 2016 (1-7 scale)

Summary Item	Albright 2014	National 2014	Albright 2016	National 2016
How would you rate your overall satisfaction with this program?	5.89	5.91	5.84	5.86
Would you recommend this program to other adult learners?	6.24	6.10	6.02	6.03

ADP currently maintains ten full-time ADP faculty positions. It also encourages traditional day faculty members to teach in ADP when available, across all locations. In 2015-16, for example, 183 of ADP’s 408 courses were taught by full-time faculty members (about 45%), and 85 of the total were taught by full-time traditional day program faculty members (21%). There has been a concerted effort, especially in the past three to four years, to ensure the two programs work more collaboratively, especially between the ADP program coordinator and the chair of the traditional department, who must approve ADP hires and receives copies of teaching evaluations. Currently five of the seven majors are overseen by a Program Coordinator who is also a full-time member of a department in the traditional day program.

### General Education

Regardless of major, all students take a core program of courses consisting of 11 to 14 courses. Information on the general education program can be found in a variety of sources, including the College catalogue, College website, traditional student handbook (the *Compass*) and ADP student handbook. The general education curriculum follows a progressive logic. The initial courses introduce students to conceptual and analytical tools that will see them through to more complex integrative understanding and practice. Albright is committed to the philosophy of a general studies program that ensures both breadth of educational experience and mastery of skills essential to well-educated

individuals. It is meant to complement study in the major, as well as prepare for it, and care was taken to ensure departments could not fully absorb general education requirements into major requirements. The design of the new program, detailed below, is a marked improvement over its predecessor, which to some degree was a “buffet style” collection of courses lacking the developmental intentionality of the new program.

The general education curriculum has three overarching goals that support Albright’s stated mission to inspire and educate, provide a strong foundation in the liberal arts and sciences, cultivate the best of human values, and foster a lifetime of service and learning:

- **Knowing the World:** Students will learn about different disciplines, their objects of study, and their approaches to knowledge, establishing a broad foundation for engaging and understanding the world.
- **Engaging the World:** Students will understand cultures as well as differences within and among them. They will learn different perspectives and contexts that shape our world and recognize the importance of social and ethical engagement in local and global contexts.
- **Understanding the World:** Students will learn to think critically, communicate effectively, and solve problems creatively by acquiring intellectual, practical, and integrative skills. By interpreting, synthesizing, and adapting knowledge and skills to different situations, students prepare for an informed engagement with the world.

As suggested in the goals listed above, the program is designed to equip students to think and analyze critically; communicate effectively, both in writing and speaking; appreciate the human historical record; understand the physical environment; understand and function in the social, economic, and political environment; understand and appreciate other cultures and the diversity of religious beliefs and practices; see and use interrelationships between various fields of knowledge; and understand and use ethical principles in developing capabilities.

Three initial courses provide a solid foundation for further study in both the student’s major and the remainder of the general education program: the First-Year Seminar (FYS) and two writing classes. FYS is required of all first-year students and is taught by full-time faculty members (or a few full-time staff who have contractual teaching expectations). The seminar’s topic is chosen by the faculty member, but it is designed to introduce academic discourse and communication skills rather than be tied explicitly to a major. These seminars are designed to be both reading- and writing-intensive, and to promote analysis and understanding that is contextualized historically, culturally, and socially. Goals, outcomes, and course characteristics of FYS courses are described in the General Education

Plan overseen by the General Education Committee. Composition (ENG 101 and 102) focuses on writing, research, and information literacy skills, complementing the skill-building in FYS. Students may be exempted from English 101 as determined by SAT scores and high school English grades.

The next level of courses, called “Foundations,” consists of one course from each of five areas: Humanities, Social Science, Natural Science, Quantitative Reasoning, and Fine Arts. Some Foundations courses may also count toward a major, depending upon the major, providing a point of early integration between the general education and major curricula. These courses focus on the goal of “Knowing the World” and introduce the student to five distinct ways in which the human community acquires and organizes knowledge.

“Connections” is the next level of the students’ general education; as part of the developmental cast of the program, these courses can be taken only after a student has completed FYS and at least three Foundations courses. Connections courses focus on the goal of “Engaging the World,” and emphasize issues of diversity, difference, and ethics as they apply to a variety of disciplinary areas and subject matter. Students are required to take two Connections courses, at least one of which must be designated for global content and at least one of which must be in the Humanities. Connections courses may not count toward the major and must be from two different departments, ensuring breadth. The goal of “Engaging the World” is also furthered by a foreign language requirement. Albright requires one to three foreign language courses in the same language, depending on proficiency level at admission.

Finally, students conclude their general education program with a “Synthesis” course, designed to act as an interdisciplinary capstone to general education parallel to the capstone course required for the major. Students draw upon experiences from their general studies and major courses to date in a critical evaluation of the subject matter. A Synthesis course focuses on the goal of “Understanding the World” and as such combines multiple academic disciplines focusing on a common subject, sometimes taught by two professors. It requires junior or senior standing and may not count towards the major. Students must complete at least one Connections course before taking the Synthesis course.

Specific courses that serve as Foundations, Connections, and Synthesis courses are listed on the website and in the registration system; additional courses are added as approved by the Curriculum Development Committee. Transfer policies try to preserve the character of our general education experience without obstructing access for transfer students. The three-Foundation pre-requisite for Connections courses is waived for transfer, but the Synthesis capstone cannot be transferred in.

A unique requirement in Albright's general studies is the expectation that students attend cultural and academic events offered each semester through a program called the Albright Experience. To complete this requirement, students attend 16 approved cultural events, ranging from plays and concerts to lectures on a wide variety of topics. The faculty Experience Committee vets proposals to determine whether an event meets the stated Experience mission of providing "programming that highlights and emphasizes the linkages between the liberal arts as embodied by Albright's General Studies curriculum and the scholarly, intellectual, cultural, and political life of the world outside the walls of the college." Many events directly support general studies objectives consistent with the institutional mission and incorporate values, ethics, and diverse perspectives (e.g., aesthetic awareness, awareness of ethical dilemmas, and understanding of political, religious, and cultural environments). The Experience website includes a calendar of events. Many events are also embedded in and linked to courses, and invited lecturers often attend relevant classes as a part of their campus visit. For example, the annual Holocaust studies lecture is always linked to one or more Holocaust studies courses through readings and reflection papers, and the lecturer teaches a class. The Experience program is integral to general education but also enhances the major, as well as the educational and cultural environment of the College as a whole.

General education courses, major courses, and elective courses reinforce each other in two ways. First, skills and abilities developed in specific general education courses are required for certain majors. Several major areas indicate specific prerequisites that may be taken as general education Foundations courses. In these cases, skills, methods, theories, core information, and disciplinary identity provide the groundwork for continued learning in the field. For example, some majors and combined majors recommend a specific quantitative skills course relevant to its discipline (such as Sociology, Accounting, and Economics). Second, general education provides skills and abilities that apply to all majors. Most students take two semesters of English composition as well as foreign language classes during their first year at the College. Higher-order skills gained in composition, such as organizing an argument, critical thinking about complex texts, grammatical precision, and verbal expression apply to routine work in all disciplines.

In a curriculum that offers diverse ways to satisfy general education requirements and encourages students to construct a variety of interdisciplinary majors, the connection between what is learned in general education courses and how that might be applied in major courses is neither simple nor linear. While many general education courses are commonly taken in the student's first few semesters,

Connections and Synthesis courses are positioned within the curriculum to allow for continuing development while complementing pursuit of a major.

### General Education for ADP Students

Continuing efforts are being made to bring the general education requirements for ADP in line with those established for the day program, despite some unique challenges of serving non-traditional learners at multiple sites who typically bring transfer credits. Alignment of ADP general education with the new general education requirements in the traditional program was implemented in June 2016. The few differences between the two sets of requirements mirror differences apparent in the old systems.

Table 7.2 Comparative General Education Requirements, Traditional and ADP Programs

<i>NEW DAY PROGRAM GEN. ED.</i>	<i>NEW ADP GEN. ED.</i>
First-Year Seminar	Not required (as previously)
ENG 101 + 102; some exempt from 101	ENG 101 + 102 (no exemptions)
Foreign Language: 1-3 courses, with beginners in 101 or 102	Two courses in foreign language and/or foreign culture (as previously)
Foundations: 1 humanities 1 quantitative reasoning 1 lab science 1 social science 1 fine arts	Same as day
Connections: 2 courses, at least 1 in the humanities and at least 1 with global focus	Same as day
Synthesis (Interdisciplinary course)	Same as day
Experience events – 16 by sophomore	Not required (as previously)

Like students in the traditional program, ADP students take both Quantitative Methods and Synthesis courses, but these are integrated into their major cohort and must be taken at Albright. Like all transfers at the sophomore level or beyond, ADP students are not required to take FYS. ADP students are required to complete two foreign language classes instead of one to three (depending on incoming level) but can substitute foreign culture-based classes for language. ADP students are also exempt from the Albright Experience requirements. ADP students would derive benefits from that program as other students do, but the non-traditional population usually have full-time jobs, families, and live far from campus.



## Evaluation and Development of Curriculum

The faculty approves and periodically reviews all curricular content in general education and degree programs across campus, through departmental monitoring and three primary committees. The Educational Policy Council (EPC)'s mission is to plan, initiate, assess, and administer, in collaboration with the Chief Academic Officer, policies pertaining to the curriculum and teaching mission of the Albright College faculty (Governance Guide V.B). EPC must approve all program-level curriculum changes. This committee is also responsible for promoting the development of new curricular concepts and assisting faculty members in the development and implementation of new programs. The Curriculum Development Committee (CDC), a committee reporting to the EPC, is responsible for approving and managing curriculum at the course level (Governance Guide V.B.8.a). In the case of general education courses, CDC uses guidelines promulgated by the General Education Committee (GEC) and approved by the EPC, and there has been significant collaboration among these three committees during these initial years of implementing the new general education program. Both the GEC and CDC are reporting committees under the EPC. The Academic Incubator Committee, an ad hoc committee of faculty and administrative leaders discussed above in Chapter Three, may also play a role in furthering development of curricular ideas.

Evaluation of curriculum is one aspect of the Academic Program Review (APR), referred to briefly in chapter three in relation to academic planning and in chapter six in relation to faculty oversight of curriculum. In the APR, which is a joint responsibility of the EPC and academic administration, departments are to address a series of questions concerning their "Educational Core." For example:

- How do the breadth, depth, and currency of curricula for the department's programs appropriately represent the discipline in the Albright context? If there is an ADP program, discuss the relationship between its curriculum and that of the day program.
- What capstone or other culminating academic experience integrates the student's experience in each program?
- To what degree is interdisciplinary study available or required as part of curricula?
- How do the curricula compare to similar programs at peer schools – give specific examples using College-designated peers on the course-unit system and additional peers if desired. Why should an incoming student consider our programs a desirable choice, and what changes if any should be considered to make them more so? (Consult with Institutional Research for peer lists.)
- To what degree does the department foster independent student scholarship such as honors work, independent studies, and undergraduate research?

- To what degree does the department foster experiential learning opportunities such as internships, service learning, community engagement, or study abroad?

Second, the external reviewers who review the self-study and visit campus offer their own analyses and contrasting examples. For example, the Art and Sociology departments both made changes to curriculum in response to reviewer suggestions, the former to its art history courses and the latter to several courses and requirements, including an additional requirement of a sociological theory course.

Curriculum change processes lie in the purview of the EPC and the Dean and Provost. EPC regularly considers their effectiveness and makes changes when warranted. The approval pathways and processes were last revised and communicated to academic departments in the 2013-14 academic year. In 2014-15, a new electronic system (“Processmaker”) was implemented to facilitate course-level approvals by the CDC, in response to the large number of proposals connected to implementing the new general education program.

The Course and Program Development link on the Faculty Resources web page provides information and forms. Changes require different levels of approval, depending on the type of change, as specified in the curriculum change grid. Course-level changes use a standard Course Change/New Course Proposal form, now administered electronically; changes approved by the CDC go into effect once approved by the dean/Provost. Program-level changes follow the Policy for EPC Curriculum Approval. In the past few years, eight new majors or co-majors were added, most recently interdisciplinary majors in Urban Affairs and Public Health. The Early Childhood and Middle Level Education programs were suspended. Such programmatic changes are broadly announced and recorded in committee minutes, in minutes of the full faculty, and (when relevant) in Board of Trustee minutes. The list of curriculum changes since 2006 shows Albright to be actively engaged with renewing its curriculum.

Curriculum changes in the graduate program are in the purview of the Graduate Advisory Council, subject to review by its parent committee, the EPC. Curriculum changes in ADP are subject to the same processes as for other undergraduate programs, as described above. While the strengthening of working relationships between traditional day academic departments and ADP is beneficial, there is some concern that it limits ADP’s ability to be as nimble as desired in its market and in its responsiveness to the educational needs of non-traditional students. There are potential programs of interest to ADP that may not gain approval under the current governance model, even though they might draw enrollment and lie within Albright’s mission. Most faculty are not involved with ADP and

not necessarily well informed about its programs and needs. The governance relationship between the traditional program and ADP is an active topic of discussion; some favor more independence for ADP's decision-making, but no specific change in governance has been proposed to date.

The development and implementation of the new general education curriculum deserves additional comment in this section, because this is a major curricular initiative by the faculty that has been ongoing since Albright's previous re-accreditation. This process began in spring 2006, when faculty from across the three academic divisions formed an ad hoc General Education Assessment Committee (GEAC) under the auspices of the Educational Policy Council to review and revise general education, based on research and discussion of current best practice. GEAC investigated a wide variety of models, through conference attendance and research, and relied on numerous all-faculty discussions (a faculty retreat, dean seminars, and surveys) before proposing the current program. The program was debated on the faculty floor during regular faculty meetings over an extended period, and underwent several revisions. New general education goals were endorsed unanimously by the faculty in spring 2007. The First-Year Seminar was approved by the faculty in November 2008 and implemented in fall 2009, while the rest of the curriculum was being finalized. The new curriculum was voted on at the May 2011 faculty meeting, with a 63% majority. It was implemented in fall 2013 with the incoming first-year class in the traditional day program and in June 2016 for students in ADP after significant planning in that program and coordination with its community college partners. The GEC was chartered in 2012 as one of the EPC's standing reporting committees and charged with general education implementation and oversight; any changes enacted by the new GEC during the program's implementation were recorded by GEC and approved by EPC, with major changes brought to the full faculty for vote. The GEC keeps an annotated copy of the general education plan that reflects approved changes to date.

### **General Education Learning Outcomes**

Phasing in this new curriculum has not been seamless. The faculty continue to evaluate its strengths and weaknesses, and both the newly formed GEC and the CDC are charged with monitoring its progress to ensure its success. The first cohort under the full new plan will graduate in spring 2017; hence there is limited data on its progress. See Chapter Four for more detail on assessment of general education. While risking redundancy, the next three paragraphs below provide a summary of the discussion there because of its importance for the current discussion of general education. Assessment going forward needs improvement in specific ways noted below and in Chapter Four. Overall, we require better evidence of student learning and of uses made of assessment results, a more realistic timetable for assessing all general education goals, better inclusion of ADP general education courses,

better-organized faculty participation in general education assessment across departments, and more explicit inclusion of general education outcomes in ADP within the GEC assessment plan.

As Chapter Four describes, all general education courses specify learning objectives in the syllabus that have been approved by the faculty. An assessment plan began in 2014-2015, in addition to institutional surveys such as the Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium (HEDS) Senior Survey and the National Student Survey on Engagement (NSSE), which are administered regularly and contribute data relevant to the achievement of general education outcomes. As noted in Chapter Four, assessment began by targeting two key competencies, written communication and information literacy, using two approaches. Incoming students were administered an information literacy questionnaire developed by CREDO, an information skills firm, through Moodle, and it showed expected deficits (mean approximately 62 on a 100-point scale). Also, toward the end of the semester, written communication was assessed by faculty teams using a rubric and artifacts from First-Year Seminar, with one element of the rubric relevant to information literacy. Most of the writing clustered just below or at the “meets expectations” score, indicating that Albright freshmen have room for improvement but are not seriously deficient, except for the category “conventions of form,” which includes the ability to use and cite sources correctly. Because their first semester showed no improvement in this area, GEC is discussing more formal expectations for the First-Year Seminar, hopefully to be implemented Fall 2017. As noted earlier, follow-up assessment is needed later in the general education program – presumably in the “Synthesis” general education capstone – for written communication and information literacy skills.

In 2015-2016, the General Education Committee piloted assessment of the Foundations portion of the general education curriculum (which introduces students to the five foundational “ways of knowing” embodied in the sciences, humanities, arts, quantitative studies, and social sciences). Response was poor, and hence an additional Foundations assessment is underway in 2016-2017. While some courses had course objectives closely aligned with Foundations goals and used assignments and assessment tailored to address course goals, others had course goals lacking connection to Foundations, and some instructors had trouble separating course-level from program-level aims and assessments. In response the GEC convened meetings of each academic division to codify the division’s specific Foundation goal(s), so that these can be better communicated to all faculty, along with example signature assignments to further student learning and assessment, and so the goals can be communicated more clearly to students in syllabi. GEC’s primary assessment target for 2016-2017 is the next tier of the curriculum, “Connections” courses, also underway. Then, during 2017-2018, the foreign language requirement will be assessed in collaboration with the departments of Modern

Foreign Languages and Literatures and of Classical Languages. Assessment of the new general education requirements in the accelerated program (ADP) begins this year, and ADP's inclusion is being explicitly planned for.

Also as noted in Chapter Four, the 2015 HEDS Senior Survey maps well to Albright's general education learning goals and showed seniors are acquiring these skills and abilities at levels similar (or greater, in the case of "effective writing") to seniors at peer Colleges. Similarly, results of our own 2015 Graduate Survey shows that graduates believe Albright prepared them very well in skills and abilities basic to the liberal arts and high-impact learning.

### **Departmental Learning Outcomes**

Each academic department has goals which are stated in terms of student learning outcomes (SLOs). An example of department learning outcomes can be found on the Religious Studies website. Course syllabi are required to include the learning objectives of the course, as outlined in the Faculty Handbook (XII.D). Many also include the departmental SLOs that should be met in the course. Departmental SLOs are reviewed and assessed on a continuing basis. Each department chair is responsible for leading continual assessment and improvement of the program, assuring rigor and adherence to the mission of the College and the department. Departments are required to submit at minimum two SLOs at the beginning of each academic year that will be assessed and included among the annual Academic Affairs area goals. For departments that offer ADP courses, assessments of student learning in ADP must be included when assessing student learning goals. In addition, most departments have completed an assessment grid for their learning outcomes and courses, and departments assess SLOs annually.

As discussed, the results of yearly assessment are included in each department's End of Year Report. Similarly, each department undergoes a more extensive Academic Program Review (APR) every five to seven years, although that calendar has been a challenge to uphold. For interdisciplinary programs involving multiple departments (such as Psychobiology, Environmental Studies and Sciences, and Child and Family Studies), there is a home department which oversees the regular coordination of the majors and minors. These programs are assessed at the same time as the home department in the APR process, with the exception of Environmental Studies and Sciences, housed in Biology and Sociology, which has a strong core of majors and will be assessed independently for the first time in 2017-18. The APR requires each department to articulate department learning goals with reference to disciplinary norms and discuss student success and assessment that inform this conclusion. The review also examines course syllabi to ensure compliance with the Faculty Handbook requirements referred

to above, which include the presence of learning objectives. The assessment of student learning is well established, yet the College is continuously improving its assessment activities, as discussed in Chapter Four. As will be discussed below in relation to the Accelerated Degree Programs, a few departments have begun using the ETS Major Field Tests, and others use capstone courses and experiences to evaluate learning outcomes.

There is no policy stating that a single syllabus must exist for a multi-section course; however, as noted above, Faculty Handbook XII.D stipulates standard requirements for course syllabi, which does help with consistency. Some departments do have departmental syllabi for multi-section courses. The Modern Foreign Language and Literatures Department uses a common syllabus and examinations for multi-section courses, and some of the language courses align textbooks. The same goes for the Math Department, with some courses using the same textbook across multi-section courses. No evidence was available to show that syllabi or textbook alignment enhances or diminishes achievement of student learning outcomes. While certain departments assess student learning outcomes the same way across all sections, each department determines its own approach to how each multi-section course is administered and evaluated. The need to offer multi-section courses does not affect all academic departments on campus. Albright's size helps foster strong communication among faculty in an effort to promote consistent learning outcomes yet allow faculty flexibility in course design.

Traditional students' overall perception of how well Albright prepared them for life after college is illustrated in the HEDS Senior Survey, which shows comparable ratings with peer seniors:

Table 7.3. Albright Seniors' Overall Evaluation of Preparedness (HEDS 2015)

Table 7. Extent to which college experiences have prepared students for... (response means)

	Albright 2013	Albright 2015	Comparison 2015
Career	3.28	3.12	3.10
Continued learning on my own or outside of a degree program	2.94	3.03	3.02
Interpersonal relationships and family living	3.00	2.88	2.96
Graduate or professional school	3.04	<b>2.86</b>	3.11
Social and civic involvement	2.89	2.77	2.77
Responsibilities of post-undergraduate life	2.63	2.69	2.51

Response means based on a four point scale of frequency: 1 "very little", 2 "some", 3 "quite a bit", 4 "very much"

## **Accelerated Degree Program Learning Outcomes**

ADP has developed practices and procedures that allow the programs to serve well the needs of non-traditional learners, while still maintaining a relationship with traditional day academic departments. While the administration of ADP is reviewed through the administrative area review process, as noted above in Chapter Four, each ADP curriculum is to be reviewed during the academic program review (APR) of the department in which the curriculum resides, a policy adopted by EPC in December, 2011. Since that time there has yet to be a department reviewed that also has an ADP major. Nonetheless, for example the curriculum of the Organizational and Applied Psychology program in ADP was reviewed by the Psychology Department in the course of its APR in 2010. (See its APR self-study document, which references DCP, the old name for the degree completion portion of ADP.) This policy allows the academic department to ensure comparable quality of instruction, academic rigor, and educational effectiveness, regardless of the location or delivery mode. However, as already noted in regard to Standard 14, we recommend more continuous assessment of ADP majors by including them in the end-of-year reports submitted by relevant academic departments. Regarding textbooks in ADP, there is program-wide textbook adoption across multi-section courses. In ADP majors, the department has standardized every textbook across these courses. ADP general studies courses, along with day courses, have no formal multi-section textbook policy.

ADP faculty and administration facilitate program assessment conversations with the academic department and support it financially to ensure that assessment occurs. ADP has helped support the use of the ETS Major Field Test (MFT) in both Psychology and Business to evaluate and compare learning outcomes in ADP and the traditional program. The ADP Psychology program used the MFT in psychology in 2011 and 2014. While the department found results satisfactory for traditional day students, it found that in 2011 ADP students scored significantly lower on one of the four subsets of the MFT and in 2014 scored significantly lower on all subsets. There has not been agreement on the significance of the contrast, since curricula and goals differ between the two programs; the Organizational Behavior/Applied Psychology degree in ADP has 25% of its curriculum focused in the management and human resources academic area, a focus lacking in the traditional Psychology programs. There needs to be better planned approach to interpreting and responding to results from ADP. In order to evaluate its Business program, in fall 2015 ADP administered the first ETS MFT in business and plans to administer this exam to each cohort during its final senior semester. The sample size of the first distribution was very small ( $n=7$ ), but this ADP cohort scored comparably to the national mean (150.29 vs. 152.1 nationally). The traditional day Business department began administering the MFT in spring 2016, and these students' mean score was 145.49, lower than the ADP students and the national average. Again, the ADP and traditional curricula differ in some degree.

Because ADP is an accelerated program, outcomes assessment is especially important, and the program has put considerable effort into transparently stating instructional equivalencies. ADP maintains course facilitator guides for courses in each major that include an instructional equivalency guide. This guide ensures that all accelerated courses are maintaining the required instructional hours per credit and gives future full-time and adjunct faculty a prescribed guide for instructing the course to ensure consistency. ADP courses do meet face-to-face but for fewer hours than traditional courses, so instructors must define what additional instructional hours outside of the physical classroom make up the difference to meet the total instructional hours required. All ADP courses, regardless of delivery method, meet the federal definition of the credit hour. The table below indicates required hours, seat time hours, and other instruction needed.

Table 7.4. Instructional hour requirements at Albright College ADP:

<b>ADP Course</b>	<b>Instructional Hours</b>	<b>Course Format</b>	<b>Physical Seat Time</b>	<b>Other Instruction</b>
4 credit course – General Studies	60 (4x15)	7 class meetings	28 face-to-face hours	60-28= 32 remaining hours
4 credit course – General Studies	60 (4x15)	Online course	0 face-to-face hours	60-0= 60 remaining hours
3 credit course – Major	45 (3x15)	5 class meetings	20 face-to-face hours	45-20= 25 remaining hours
		6 class meetings	24 face-to-face hours	45-24=21 remaining hours
		7 class meetings	28 face-to-face hours	45-28=17 remaining hours

One example of how classes meet credit hour requirements is the course equivalency charts embedded in each week’s instructions in the facilitator guide for the ADP course BUS 935.

### **Learning Resources, Facilities, Instructional Equipment, and Library Services**

Albright currently has a number of support services available on campus. The major academic resources include the Academic Learning Center, Writing Center, Disability Services Office, Registrar, Library, Experiential Learning & Career Development Center, Information Technology Services, and AV/Educational Technology. Students at off-campus locations access academic support services primarily through Albright’s website, e-mail, and Moodle, our course management system. Albright College offers parallel support to students enrolled in ADP (see Chapter Five).



## **Library**

The Gingrich Library supports the institution's educational programs, through collection development, online cataloging, reference, library instruction, interlibrary loan, circulation, and reserves. It is also a unit in transition, after the untimely death of its long-time director in 2015. The reference and general collections contain more than 352,000 print and electronic books and periodicals, microforms, and audiovisual materials. Digital resources provide access to more than 100 different book, journal, and newspaper databases. All students have complete access to the Gingrich Library catalog, electronic books, and all of its electronic databases from on-campus, in residence halls, and off campus. For on-campus students, the Library provides space for study and socializing. As noted earlier, a small-scale renovation of the first floor is to be completed by February 2017. The current fundraising campaign has raised more than \$5 million towards a major renovation to the library, an aging facility not adequate to the College's vision for a more integrated learning commons (see information and virtual "fly-through" on the website). Students at remote locations can access most library services online. Each academic department has a library liaison who collaborates with the department by assisting it in building library services and collections in its area and keeping it informed of relevant library information.

In order for graduates to become contributing members of an increasingly information-dependent society, it is critical for them to be able to find, evaluate, validate, and distill information. Students also need to know how to access learning resources available in the academic setting. Information literacy is presented and evaluated in the First-Year Seminar (FYS) and ENG 102 (a required writing course), and in other general education courses. The librarians are active partners with faculty members in providing class instruction that promotes information literacy and access of academic resources. For example, librarians provided support in one hundred traditional and ADP courses in fall semester 2015. In addition to the College-wide measures, the librarians solicit feedback about individual instruction sessions through the use of a feedback form, in order for individual librarians to improve their own teaching methods and session content. However, these assessments have not been done on a regularly basis, nor had the results been tracked systematically until recent improvements to the process.

Like transfer students, students who are enrolled in ADP are exempt from the First-Year Seminar; however, ADP students receive a non-credit course taught and developed by the Library to help them better understand library resources and increase information literacy. The Library is also a partner in the academic review process (APR). Academic departments receive a consulting report from the

Library regarding services used and resources needed, and Library staff meet with external reviewers to discuss the Library's role in supporting faculty and students in that department.

### **Information Technology Services (ITS)**

Information Technology Services facilitates learning by enabling students to explore resources available electronically—via internet, wireless, voice mail, and e-mail. In addition, faculty members are provided the network infrastructure to access instructional tools. Network access, hardware and software, and helpdesk support are accessible from all locations, including main campus centers, instructional buildings, ADP locations, and the residence halls. The Information Development Committee (IDC), a reporting committee under EPC, is a partnership between ITS and faculty, and is charged with developing and maintaining support for the technology needs of faculty and students. As noted in Chapter Five above, Albright seniors report being significantly more satisfied with computer services and support than comparison seniors (2015 HEDS Senior Survey, figure 4). ITS has a well-defined multi-year plan for continuing support of classroom technology.

Faculty members in the undergraduate, accelerated degree, and graduate programs use Moodle as a course management system to supplement many of their courses. First-year students are introduced to Moodle in many FYS, while ADP students are familiarized with the software in their introductory e-learning non-credit course. Academic programs may also require that students master select Microsoft Office applications; in addition, other software may be integrated into courses, such as SPSS, FrontPage, and Director. Several majors (for example, Fashion) require training in hardware and software specific to the academic program. All students, faculty, and staff have access to the Microsoft 365 suite of applications, and are allowed multiple downloads of this software on their personal computers.

### **Serving Under-Prepared Students**

The College has a robust approach to identifying and supporting at-risk students that was discussed at length in Chapter Five. Up until summer 2016, the only special program offering non-credit instruction for underprepared traditional day students has been the now-suspended Summer Start program, included in the earlier discussion. Also mentioned in Chapter Five is ENG 101+, a version of the initial freshman composition course that offers extended class time and instruction to those placed in the course due to low grades or test scores.

Although the traditional day program no longer offers remedial or pre-collegiate academic courses that do not carry academic degree credit, there are several such courses offered in ADP. All students

entering ADP, excluding those majoring in Information Systems, are required to take ADP 900 E-learning. This course is intended to acquaint the students with the online platform and accessing library resources. Those students majoring in Information Systems and Management or in Business Administration are required to take ADP 902 Writing Review, which focuses on reviewing the basics of collegiate writing. Additionally, ADP 905 Math Review is offered to students in the Information Systems and Management, Business Administration, and Crime & Justice cohorts. This course is intended to prepare students for the required Business Statistics course. Students in these majors are strongly encouraged to take this course, but it is not a requirement.

These non-credit offerings are consistent with Albright College’s mission to inspire and educate the scholar and leader in each student. They are designed to provide the students with the stepping stones needed to be successful in their chosen degree program. Each course has a Master Moodle Course template, which is used to ensure consistency of course goals, objectives, and expectations of student learning across instructors. At the end of each semester, instructors evaluate how their respective course achieved the stated goals and objectives. Additionally, students submit course evaluations at the end of the course, as is the case with all other classes.

### **Experiential Learning**

Albright embraces experiential learning as an important part of the “high-impact” educational practices advocated for in AAC&U’s LEAP initiative, and it is a strategic goal. Albright’s primary focus in experiential learning for students is through internships, academic service learning, study abroad (individually or on a faculty-led class trip), and undergraduate research (UGR) in the “ACRE” program. The College has increased experiential learning offerings since the current Strategic Plan was adopted in 2012, as shown below:

Table 7.5. Increased Experiential Learning, 2012-2015

<b>Type of Experiential Learning</b>	<b>2011-12</b>	<b>2012-13</b>	<b>2013-14</b>	<b>2014-15</b>	<b>2015-16</b>	<b>Increase</b>
Faculty-led Study Abroad	43	50	30	51	26*	-39.5%
ACRE Proposals submitted	33	31	44	56	37	12%
Individual Study Abroad	18	27	17	28	48	166.6%
Undergraduate Research regional conference	46	25	32	50	57	24%
Presentations at NCUR	2	5	5	8	5	150%
Internships reported	no data	125	129	138	137	9.6%

One should add that preliminary figures for faculty-led study abroad for 2016-2017 show an increase to over 60, a striking rebound from the unusual low of 2015-2016. Data from the 2014 NSSE (p.14) indicate that Albright seniors participate in high-impact practices to an extent comparable to peers. Much of this activity is overseen by the Experiential Learning and Career Development Center (ELCDC), created in 2011 to put undergraduate research, study abroad, and internships under one roof and one director, which has enabled us to better plan, publicize, and promote high-impact learning activities to all constituencies. Funding for the ELCDC increased 38% between fiscal 2012 and fiscal 2016, to over \$368,000.

The majority of experiential learning activities completed by Albright College students are internships. From the year 2009 to 2015, Albright College internship participation increased from 45% of seniors to 64.5%, according to those HEDS surveys. Some majors and minors added internship requirements to their program (for example, women's and gender studies). Albright students have interned at public accounting firms such as PricewaterhouseCoopers and Deloitte, nonprofit organizations such as Opportunity House and the United Way, museums such as the Reading Public Museum and the Franklin Institute, health care facilities such as Planned Parenthood and the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, fashion-related businesses such as Gucci and Eileen Fisher, and theatre companies such as Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey and Williamstown Theatre Festival. Additional examples of internship sites can be found on the Experiential Learning website.

In order to assure academic rigor and consistency for all credit-bearing internships, in 2009 a committee comprised of faculty members, the Provost, and the Director of Career Development reviewed best practices for credited internships and the procedures for the Albright College departments that had internships as a requirement. From this committee new procedures were drafted, along with an Internship Agreement and Procedures that are now used College-wide. The agreement has been updated to reflect compliance, accountability issues, changes in academic majors, and job search platforms.

Evaluations of credit-bearing internships are done by the supervising faculty member, with input from the site supervisor. All students must complete academic components to receive credit, which vary on the type of internship. The components are comprised of reflective journals, portfolios, research papers, presentations, or some sort of capstone project. Students cannot begin the internship until the syllabus has been accepted by the Registrar and the Internship Agreement has been completed and signed by the student, supervising faculty member, and site supervisor. As described in the Agreement, credit-bearing internships require 130 to 150 on-site hours, and are assigned corresponding course

numbers, as determined by the chair of the department and the supervising faculty member (282 Introductory, 382 Intermediate, or 482 Advanced).

Over the past few years, Albright has worked to develop a strong study abroad program, which includes scholarships and grants to participate (an important support for our student body). There are many programs in which a student can participate for their study abroad experience. The Experiential Learning and Career Development Center (ELCDC) oversees study abroad opportunities in order ensure they are meeting the College's standards. The center provides a range of services to students seeking study abroad opportunities, including a comprehensive webpage to provide information and workshops throughout the year that publicize opportunities, present first-hand experiences of past participants, and advise on the process.

Albright has designated certain study abroad and domestic programs as affiliates and also owns property in Costa Rica being developed as a study-away site for faculty-led trips. An affiliate is a highly recommended program and provides valuable educational programs and cultural experiences to participating students. Studying with an affiliate provides an Albright student access to affiliate-sponsored financial aid and other perks unavailable to non-affiliated students. Courses taken in approved study abroad programs, or in approved domestic off-campus study semester-long programs (such as the Washington Center or the National Theatre Institute), are treated as Albright courses for the requirement that transfer students must complete at least 16 courses at Albright. As Albright courses, they also do not affect the requirement that continuing students can take no more than four courses at other institutions. As for transfer courses, grades in these courses are not counted in the GPA. Faculty-led study abroad courses have been successful as well, and many departments have successfully incorporated them into their major curriculum as well as general education. Collaborations across departments for trips such as those to Paris, Ecuador, and Peru have been well received and offer unique pedagogical impact.

Undergraduate research is a key high-impact activity at Albright, primarily through the Albright Creative Research Experience (ACRE) Program. ACRE is an interdisciplinary undergraduate research program in which students have the opportunity to conduct research or creative activity in close partnership with faculty mentors. Students from all majors are invited to submit an application for an ACRE project to be executed during the summer or the January interim session. The number of applications increased by 70% between 2011-2012 and 2014-2015. A faculty committee reviews the proposals and recommends awards. Selected students and faculty members are both paid a stipend, and students receive room and board free of charge during the ACRE period. Students and faculty

from all disciplines meet weekly for lunch-time presentations to share their experiences and learn from each other. Many collaborative teams of students and faculty members present their research at academic conferences and publish their results in professional journals. Additionally, all students are eligible to apply for financial assistance to present at conferences through our Student Travel Funding Program, up to \$750 per year. The ACRE program continues to grow and thrive, and has been aided by grant funding from the Hearst Foundation and Mellon Foundation. A listing of ACRE projects shows not only the number of projects but also their disciplinary diversity. Funded projects rose from an average of 27.7 annually during 2006-2011 to 36.6 during 2012-2016.

ADP students may participate in study abroad and internships, but the schedule of adult students makes this rare. ADP students are permitted to claim credits for prior experiential learning, for which the ADP Student Handbook provides clear policies, examples, and definitions. Students interested in exploring prior learning assessment (PLA) may submit a portfolio for evaluation by Albright's Academic Credit for Experiential Learning (ACEL) program. Managed by the Associate Director for ADP, this program provides students with a process to earn up to 24 credits in general studies or elective coursework. The Associate Director, who has completed training on PLA with the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, coordinates portfolios and makes recommendations to the ADP Director. As needed, the Associate Director also consults with department chairs, as well as the Provost, on decisions.

While Albright has made strides in achieving its goals for better quantity and quality of internship availability and study abroad opportunities, it has lagged behind with academic service learning opportunities. The College has individuals well versed in service learning and is connected to relevant professional associations, such as Campus Compact. However, as a small school with limited funding, along with the extensive time and resources it takes to build a successful service-learning course, professors have been reluctant to take on the challenge. The College has sponsored speakers and workshops on service learning over the years, and in 2014 the Provost made available \$10,000 in competitive funding for faculty members who created service-learning projects within their coursework and taught the course in the 2015-2016 academic year. Five faculty members in Economics, Psychology, Environmental Science, and Sociology used this support to add service learning to their courses. This is an underdeveloped area for the College, especially given our aspirations to increase community engagement, but requires further investment of budget and of faculty and staff time.

The National Surveys of Student Engagement, given to a sample of first-year students and seniors every two years, provides evidence of Albright's experiential programs relative to peer institutions. The most recent survey, from 2014, shows that Albright lags behind our peer group of 16 institutions, the Mid East Private, and the Private Liberal Arts institutions in the areas of study abroad and service learning. However, while the number of students who have studied abroad since 2014 has increased, service learning has stayed static at best. Reported internship/field experience numbers are mixed, comparing less favorably with our peer group (AC=64%, peers=73%) and Mid East Private (72%), but better than the Private Liberal Arts group as a whole (59%). The same statement can be made for research with faculty: Albright's percentage is less than those of the peer group (41% vs. 45%) and Mid East Private (50%), but better than that of Private Liberal Arts Colleges (36%).

The College is currently discussing how to make the January (Interim) term more robust in terms of both academic offerings and revenue, and many of the recommendations probably will fall in the areas of high-impact practices/experiential learning. We will be looking at the Summer terms with the same intent. In 2013 the College sent a team of faculty and staff to an AAC&U institute on high-impact practices to support our increasing interest and commitment to improving these practices. A draft proposal resulted regarding strategy and funding, which will be taken up by the new Provost.

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Albright College offers a wide range of degree programs across the liberal arts and sciences in its traditional, accelerated, and graduate programs, emphasizing interdisciplinary and integrative thinking. Over half of our graduates take advantage of the ability to combine majors, in addition to those graduating with an inherently interdisciplinary major. Thriving Accelerated Degree Programs (ADP) for non-traditional learners, provide seven majors in a cohort program taught with significant contribution from full-time faculty, many from the traditional day program. The ADP has a well-structured approach to ensuring instructional equivalencies and has been a key player in implementing capstone assessments. Nevertheless, ADP feels somewhat constrained in its ability to respond to market demand for new programs. Albright's recently implemented general education program will have its first graduates in 2017, and it reflects our commitment to an intentional and integrative liberal arts education that supports the College mission. Indirect assessment, both internal and benchmarked, show that general education-related outcomes are strong, but better direct assessment of the general education program is on the horizon. Experiential learning has been a focus in recent years, and important gains have been seen in undergraduate research, internships, and study abroad. More can be done, however, especially in the area of service-learning.

Learning resources and facilities at Albright are strong, and address the needs of under-prepared students, in lieu of remedial opportunities (discussed in more detail in Chapter Four). A periodic departmental academic review process is well established, a joint responsibility of the faculty and administration, which continually assesses Albright's curriculum and improves student learning.

### **Recommendations**

1. Complete execution of the current general education assessment plan and ensure a sustainable long-term assessment process that is built upon broad faculty participation (Standard 12)

### **Suggestions**

1. Evaluate the need for a college-wide writing program
2. Increase communication and articulation between the traditional day program and Accelerated Degree Programs (ADP)
3. Continue to assess institutional obstacles to ADP's ability to develop new programs in response to its market
4. Explore a replacement for the Summer Start program as an opportunity for incoming academically at-risk students
5. Evaluate the desirability and options for implementing an experiential learning graduation requirement for all students



## CONCLUSION

In the Self-Study Design Document submitted to the Commission in October 2015, we enumerated seven goals for our self-study process:

1. To produce a constructive document that will meet the needs of the MSCHE by demonstrating compliance with the Standards of accreditation
2. To involve the campus community as a whole in the assessment of the College and in conversations about the College's mission, goals, and future direction
3. To produce a valuable tool for constructing the College's next strategic plan
4. To improve communication and collegiality among all campus constituents
5. To aid in deciding what major structural changes may be necessary to better align the College's expenses and revenues
6. To evaluate the assessment of student learning across all programs, including the new general education curriculum and the Accelerated Degree Programs, and its impact on improving student learning outcomes
7. To document evidence of educational quality and commitment to continuous improvement that inspires confidence among all College stakeholders

We have met these goals, and more, throughout our work on re-accreditation.

Over the course of two years, the College has engaged in a self-study process that directly involved 72 people from the faculty, administration, trustees, and students who served on working groups and on the Steering Committee. Faculty members from multiple departments and administration from across divisions worked closely together to produce drafts. In addition, presentations were given to faculty members, administration, students, alumni, and trustees to both update these constituencies and solicit input. Several important surveys were conducted. The Steering Committee hosted open forums aimed at faculty, staff, administration and students. The President and the Provost (once she joined Albright) have been close consultants. The production of the final Self-Study document has been a community-wide enterprise. The re-accreditation process has provided an excellent opportunity for campus conversations about what we do well and where we need to improve, and about where we have been and where we want to go. Not only will the Self-Study demonstrate to the Commission our adherence to the standards of excellence, but the data and analyses gathered here will provide a strong foundation for our next strategic plan and for constructive action in the near term.

Our vision for our future is expansive, even though we have separated our proposed improvements into discrete, concrete recommendations and suggestions. We would like to highlight two interrelated

items in particular. We recommend pursuing additional funding for a new learning commons, and we suggest the creation of a Teaching and Learning Center. These two items are at the core of a re-envisioning of how we approach teaching, learning, research, and support services on campus. Both are currently attached to our plans to renovate the library. The library is the heart of any academic community, and the renovation would better address the academic needs of a media-saturated, increasingly digital world. It would also better showcase distinctive assets like our Holocaust Resource Center, which not only houses an impressive collection of books and videos but also has been collecting and cataloguing survivor testimony in Berks County. A renovated library with a learning commons that brought support services together with a Teaching and Learning Center would invigorate teaching and learning on this campus, making it stronger and more vibrant for everyone. It is not just about space; rather, such integration creates synergy, collaboration and cooperation all toward the one, overarching goal of Albright College: to educate students.

Albright College is well positioned to meet the opportunities and the challenges of educating students in the twenty-first century. We attract a diverse student body, many of whom are low-income and first-generation and offer a strong network of support for their success. We provide students with a strong general education core that brings them the breadth of human knowledge with a special emphasis on interdisciplinary learning and diversity here and across the globe. Since the general education program is newly implemented, the College is at the beginning of its assessment of it, which must continue to improve. A new Teaching and Learning Center could be, among other things, the site of faculty development around both teaching general education and assessing its outcomes. The Self-Study process has also identified departments that could better align their course-level and program-level student learning outcomes, which will be assisted by increased faculty development as well. A more formal program of writing across the disciplines and an experiential learning requirement for all students could further build on our strengths. We look forward to exploring these possibilities.

The Accelerated Degree Programs provide an opportunity for non-traditionally aged, working adults to earn a college degree and serves this community well. They do, however, have room to grow, and their relation to the traditional program can be clarified and improved.

Finally, like so many other small liberal arts colleges, especially those that are tuition-dependent, we have financial challenges. With an experienced board that has expertly managed our portfolio, a President who has led our successful fundraising campaigns, and much-improved budgeting processes, Albright has weathered the financial storms of 2008 and beyond. It is time now to do a fuller audit of our innovative 100% meet-need financial aid strategy and to resolve a persistent problem

with projected budgets that has resulted in last-minute budget adjustments and relatively flat faculty and staff salaries. As we move forward, we will continue to identify additional revenue opportunities, ensure long-term balance between revenues and expenses, refine our financial and enrollment modeling, and assure a modest operating margin.

The Commission will ultimately confirm the extent of our compliance with its standards of excellence, but the self-study process itself has been enormously beneficial to the campus community. The research and conversations in which we have been engaged have allowed us to identify ways to strengthen our educational programs, governance, student services, and financial health and to prepare the ground for a successful new strategic plan. Below are the formal recommendations and suggestions that emerged from the Self-Study:

### **Standard 1: Mission and Goals**

#### *Recommendation:*

1. Complete implementation of rebranding effort, including redesign of the College website and improved processes for editing and maintaining web pages

### **Standard 2: Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal**

#### *Recommendations:*

1. Develop a sustainable operating model and financial plan that reduces tuition-dependence by increasing revenue, reducing expense, and assuring a modest, recurring operating margin within the budget
2. Working with the new President of the College, create a new strategic plan

#### *Suggestions:*

1. Define and implement a protocol for regular budget updates to the entire campus community to continue to improve communication and gain input
2. Enhance training of budget managers, especially new budget managers

### **Standard 3: Institutional Resources**

#### *Recommendations:*

1. Now that all classes have entered under the new “meet need” financial aid strategy, further assess the value and viability of this practice and share findings with campus stakeholders
2. Make further investments in residence hall renovations and improvements
3. Pursue additional funding for library renovation, to include a new learning commons as a key site for improved teaching and learning

#### *Suggestions:*

1. Take steps to implement recommendations from surveys on classroom space and technology, including the Instructional Space Utilization Study, to enhance the teaching and learning environment and better support enrollment

#### **Standard 4: Leadership and Governance**

*Suggestions:*

1. Provide centralized web access to committee minutes, maintain accurate committee lists, and make these readily available
2. Undertake campus conversations on the meaning and exercise of transparency and shared governance at Albright

#### **Standard 5: Administration**

*Recommendation:*

1. Strengthen periodic review of administrative areas, ensuring timely completion and useful results

*Suggestion:*

1. Develop a means, such as “360” reviews, for broader community input into performance assessment, especially that of senior administrators

#### **Standard 6: Integrity**

*Recommendation:*

1. Complete an effective intellectual property policy that serves the entire campus
2. Design and implement a plan to increase faculty and staff diversity

*Suggestion:*

1. Improve storage, access, and maintenance of official policies, both faculty and administrative

#### **Standard 7: Institutional Assessment**

*Suggestion:*

1. Develop administrative goals where appropriate that are connected to student learning outcomes, especially in student support areas, and provide related professional development for staff as needed
2. Review Assessment Committee role and determine opportunities to collaborate with other faculty committees and academic processes to promote further a sustainable, broadly based assessment culture

#### **Standard 8: Student Admissions and Retention**

*Suggestion:*

1. In order to improve retention and persistence, improve the systematic collection and analysis of information from and about students
2. Take steps to implement recommendations from surveys on classroom space and technology, including the Instructional Space Utilization Study, to enhance the teaching and learning environment and better support enrollment

#### **Standard 9: Student Support Services**

*Recommendation:*

1. Educate the College community about various means available to communicate complaints and grievances, especially the new student grievance forms, and ensure appropriate tracking and response

*Suggestion:*

1. Improve the goals, training, and assessment of student academic advising

### **Standard 10: Faculty**

#### *Recommendations:*

1. Revise the non-tenure track and tenure track faculty evaluation systems to clarify expectations with regard to workload, scholarship, and service
2. Improve definitions of faculty workload and the distribution of faculty committee work, relying in part on previous discussions funded by the Sloan Foundation
3. Review, improve, and communicate processes for hiring, evaluating, supporting, and recognizing adjunct faculty

#### *Suggestions:*

1. Develop goals and implement a plan to improve faculty compensation, including that of part-time faculty, with reference to national and regional benchmarks
2. Build upon the current Teaching and Learning Committee to create a formal Teaching and Learning Center to support excellence in faculty teaching
3. Improve procedures for regularly updating the Faculty Handbook to keep it accurate and current

### **Standard 11: Educational Offerings**

#### *Suggestion:*

1. Evaluate the need for a college-wide writing program

### **Standard 12: General Education**

#### *Recommendation:*

1. Complete execution of the current general education plan and ensure a sustainable long-term assessment process that is built upon broad faculty participation

### **Standard 13: Related Educational Activities**

#### *Suggestions:*

1. Increase communication and articulation between the traditional day program and Accelerated Degree Programs (ADP)
2. Continue to assess institutional obstacles to ADP's ability to develop new programs in response to its market
3. Explore a replacement for the Summer Start program as an opportunity for incoming academically at-risk students
4. Evaluate the desirability and options for implementing an experiential learning graduation requirement for all students

### **Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning**

#### *Recommendation:*

1. Strengthen alignment of course and program-level student learning outcomes through improved reporting and communication mechanisms to make student learning outcomes and evidence more accessible at the course, program and institutional levels

2. Formally integrate assessment of learning outcomes of Accelerated Degree Program majors and general education into annual college-wide assessment and planning

*Suggestion:*

1. Increase faculty development in assessment, including training for individual departments and resources for adjuncts

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