ALBRIGHT COLLEGE SELF-STUDY
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
February 2017

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.