Report to Faculty, Administrators, Trustees, and Students
of
Borough of Manhattan Community College,
City University of New York
199 Chambers St.
New York, NY 10007

Prepared following analysis of the institution’s
Periodic Review Report

First Reviewer
Sandra F. Dunnington, PhD
Vice President for Academic Affairs
Prince George’s Community College

Second Reviewer
Dr. Joan E. Brookshire
Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs
Montgomery County Community College

August 18, 2013
Evaluation of the Periodic Review Report of
Borough of Manhattan Community College

I. Introduction

The Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC; College) is one of 19 colleges that comprise the City University of New York (CUNY). Originating fifty years ago as a small, primarily business-oriented community college whose programs were aimed at the mid-town business community, the College now serves more than 33,000 students across more than 30 degree and certificate (continuing education) programs. At its start, the College served 467 students in rented office space; however, today the College owns three buildings in lower Manhattan and other instructional sites throughout New York City.

BMCC’s diverse student body comes from more than 100 countries, leading Community College Week in 2011 to rank BMCC first nationally in awarding associate degrees to African American students, second in awarding degrees to Hispanic students, and second overall in awarding degrees to minority students.

The Periodic Review Report (PRR) provided the readers with an overview of institutional progress since the last decennial Self-Study and team visit in 2008 as well as the Monitoring Report in 2010. The PRR is well-organized and supplemented by appendices and links to documents and materials that provide evidentiary material. The PRR states that BMCC’s PRR was co-chaired by two long-standing faculty members who were supported by 16 subcommittees comprised of 150 employees, representative of faculty, staff, and administrators across all areas of the college.

II. Responses to Recommendations from Previous Decennial Evaluation

This section summarizes BMCC’s assessment of the recommendations contained in the report prepared by the visiting team for the 2008 evaluation cycle. The PRR addresses 5 of the 14 MSCHE standards through the nine (9) recommendations from the Visiting Team, as well as each of the Team’s 17 suggestions, which address nine (9) standards. The readers did not find any assessment of BMCC’s own Self-Study recommendations. Because the discussion of suggestions goes beyond what is required by the PRR, and the reviewers are expected to limit their responses to essential aspects of the PRR, the follow-up to the suggestions will not be described in this report, unless the findings are especially salient to a recommendation. However, it is important to note that nearly all of the suggestions have been addressed by the College and have resulted in improved processes and procedures. The majority of BMCC’s discussion of Standards 7 and 14, as well as the reviewers’ responses, will be provided in Section V of this report.

Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal (Standard 2)

The site visitors provided two recommendations for this standard. The first recommendation was that BMCC delineate how the institution incorporates assessment in its strategic plan. Furthermore, the institution should describe how the assessment results are used for institutional renewal within the context of the strategic plan.

To address the first recommendation, the PRR indicates that BMCC has initiated a college-wide process that will assist faculty, staff, and administrators in defining and refining institutional assessment in light of the College’s 2008 to 2013 Strategic Plan, called A Bridge to the Future. This process revolves around a Collaborative Improvement Model (CIM) that links planning and assessment. The PRR provided a link to a presentation about the process and model that has been widely distributed and presented at BMCC by the Dean of Institutional Effectiveness and Strategic
Planning, a position created in part to address this recommendation from the Middle States. The PRR identifies the four goals of the CIM, which revolve around creating a framework that fosters shared responsibility by the College community for assessment plans that address the BMCC Strategic Plan, provide institutional data and metrics, and subsequently lead to communication to address challenges and build upon successes. The PRR states that this process has assisted the College in assessment, continuous process improvement, and strategic action planning. Leadership for the CIM is provided by the Collaborative Improvement Council and the Strategic Steering Committees with representation across all areas of the College.

The PRR also provides examples, in both table and narrative formats, of how strategic action planning across all four strategic priorities has evolved from this process and the related committees, thereby providing for institutional renewal. Some examples discussed include: hiring a full-time director of the Center for Excellence in Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship; establishment of programs to promote faculty scholarship and publications; decennial Academic Program Planning Reviews; the Freshman Learning Activities Program; an accelerated program, called Accelerated Study of Associates Program; and strategic business partnerships. In addition, as a member of CUNY, BMCC annually participates in the CUNY/BMCC Performance Management Plan (PMP) which measures the College’s utilization of resources against its strategic priorities. Key data indicators are published by CUNY that shows how each college in the system has performed. Annual data indicators are also published, showing how well each CUNY college has progressed relative to indicators that are linked to its own strategic goals. As a result of these reports, BMCC annually creates goals and targets for improvement that are submitted to the University.

*The reviewers commend BMCC for establishing a variety of methods and processes for assessing the strategic plan and for using those results to promote institutional renewal.*

The second recommendation related to standard 2 was that BMCC update its facilities master plan not only to account for the rebuilding of Fiterman Hall to meet enrollment needs, but also to take into account the critical space needs of this enrollment growth. The CUNY Central Office and the Board of Trustees of CUNY must play a role in addressing BMCC’s space needs.

The PRR states that creation of a Facilities Master Plan rests with CUNY and is not within the College’s control and that this should have been clarified to the visiting team. As such, the PRR indicates that CUNY’s Office of Facilities Planning, Construction and Management (FPCM) has the responsibility for creating a University Facilities Master plan for all 23 colleges and professional schools and for updating BMCC’s portion of that plan. The PRR also states that “the lack of an updated plan has not prevented the University from expanding and improving BMCC’s physical plant to better meet student needs” (p. 34).

The CUNY Facilities Master Plan is based on 10-year enrollment projections provided by each CUNY institution and is used to determine space needs both for individual colleges and for the system as a whole. BMCC convened a Physical Master Planning Task Force in 2011-2012 to project FTE enrollment by subject area and/or discipline. The Task Force examined a variety of enrollment variables and determined that, having met the CUNY’s enrollment targets, BMCC will maintain level enrollments through 2020 and that enrollment growth will be met by other colleges in the CUNY system. Subsequently, the Physical Master Plan for the College is currently being updated.

The PRR also points out that many of the space constraints identified during the site visit have been greatly relieved with the opening of the 390,000 square foot Fiterman Hall immediately prior to the start of the fall 2012 semester. BMCC has now started to refurbish the 35-year-old 199 Chambers Street
Building to ensure ADA compliance, improve the HVAC system, and update data transmission capabilities. Renovations are due to be completed in early 2015. To address additional space issues, the PRR notes that BMCC: has leased classroom space at two additional sites that provide a BMCC presence in upper and lower Manhattan, administers the Manhattan Educational Opportunity Center (MEOC) in uptown Manhattan on behalf of the State University of New York, and also offers classes at three CUNY senior college campuses.

Institutional Resources (Standard 3)

For standard 3, the 2008 visiting team recommended that the College develop a comprehensive Technology Master Plan.

The PRR indicates that this recommendation has not been met because the College wants to first fill a new position, the Vice President of Information Technology (VP-IT), who will consolidate all technology planning and oversee the development of the Technology Master Plan. At the time of the submission of the PRR, BMCC reports the College had already completed two unsuccessful searches for this new position. However, the PRR also states that the Technology Master Plan’s development will be the first responsibility of the VP-IT once hired.

In the interim, there are structures in place for making decisions about academic technology, but the PRR describes them as often being “cumbersome” as a result of several layers of approvals being required for implementation. BMCC acknowledges that the College makes extensive and pervasive use of technology in and out of academic settings and believes that the creation of the Technology Master Plan will greatly assist the college staff to support student learning and the Mission of the College.

The reviewers recommend that the development of a comprehensive Technology Master Plan begin in the 2013-14 academic year to ensure that technologies are supporting student learning and success as well as BMCC’s Mission and Strategic Plan.

Educational Offerings (Standard 11)

The visiting team made two recommendations related to assessment of educational offerings, support programs, and learning enhancements. The first was that program goals need to be stated in terms of measurable student outcomes, and the second was that program assessment needs to be part of all programs and needs to directly relate to student outcomes.

The PRR provides a list of non-academic/educational support programs administered and assessed at BMCC through either BMCC or CUNY. For those programs offered through BMCC, the PRR points out that the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Strategic Planning have held sessions to assist program leaders with the development and implementation of assessment plans as well as use of assessment results into future planning. Several examples of closing the loop were provided and programs that have successfully completed external reviews were identified. In addition, the PRR notes that “all Continuing Education programs are assessed by CUNY’s Central Office of Adult Continuing Education and BMCC’s Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA), through course assessments and mandated data collection” (p. 25). BMCC also provided examples of a few programs that have been changed as a direct result of program assessments. In addition, the reviewers located a few examples of program goals and/or outcomes on the College Website. However, the evidence did not demonstrate that the outcome development and program assessments were pervasive.
The reviewers recommend that BMCC continue to develop measurable outcomes for its Educational Offerings and institute program assessment that relates directly to student outcomes.

General Education (Standard 12)

For standard 12, the visiting team recommended that there be evidence that all programs embedding general education goals in courses and in course assessment as prescribed in BMCC’s General Education Plan.

To ensure that this recommendation was addressed, BMCC began to enforce a college policy in which all syllabi revisions must contain a clear category stating which General Education learning goals will be met by the course and what direct assessment measures are being implemented for the related goals. A syllabi revision timeline was established and was provided as a link through the PRR. The PRR notes that the OIRA conducts assessment workshops annually and that more than 80 faculty across 20 academic departments have attended training on General Education assessment. To supplement the training, OIRA has developed a website with information on General Education learning outcomes and assessment. In addition, the BMCC General Education Assessment Committee (BGEAC) works with Department Chairs to ensure the directives are being carried out and are attending department meetings with monthly updates.

According to the PRR, as of fall 2012, 63.7% of all programs at BMCC have revised their syllabi to meet this recommendation. This number exceeds the target of 50% revisions as delineated in the Syllabi Revision Timeline. The PRR states that 13 of 18 academic departments have reached or exceeded the goal of 50% compliance rate in the revision of syllabi. The PRR concludes that BMCC is “ahead of schedule and has achieved the goal of revising syllabi with student learning outcomes, general education outcomes, and direct methods of assessment a year in advance of the timeline” (p. 26). Furthermore, the PRR points out that since the General Education assessment efforts have started, 22 of the 31 assessments completed have closed the loop. Beyond these assessments of General Education, CUNY requires that two broad General Education proficiencies be assessed annually. The schedule for that assessment is listed in a table in the PRR and is accompanied by a list of courses completing those assessments. Two appendices contain additional information on the status of general education assessment.

The reviewers suggest that the College develop a plan to address those departments that have not met the 50% goal to ensure they stay on track for completing the General Education alignment and assessment.

III. Major Challenges and/or Opportunities

This section of the PRR begins with a brief narrative statement but is primarily comprised of a two-and-one-half-page table that lists six categories of challenges and/or opportunities with specific items under each linked to Middle States’ standards and a corresponding bulleted list of how BMCC is meeting each challenge and/or seizing the opportunity provided. The lack of narrative made it a bit difficult for the reviewers to clearly distinguish which items were put forth as challenges versus opportunities. However, it could eventually be extrapolated based on the response about how the challenge or opportunity was being addressed.

The categories addressed in this section of the PRR are: Our College and University, Our Location, Our Students, Our Curriculum, Our Faculty, and Our Technological Environment. Under Our College and University, the PRR points out that while being part of a large university system has many advantages,
there are definite challenges when individual colleges do not have full decision-making control. Opportunities listed under Our College and University include transfer opportunities, collaboration, ability to participate in large-scale pilot programs, access to research libraries, and sharing of best practices. Challenges include centralization of curriculum, identified as the new CUNY Pathways General Education Curriculum; budget constraints; and continual change and adaptation in response to needs of students and the community.

For the second category, Our Location, the combined opportunities and challenges include Lower Manhattan, one of the fastest growing residential areas of New York City; costly expansion due to expensive real estate market; location at a major hub for transportation, and an aging population. The third category of Our Students is further delineated by the following items: managing enrollment, broad cultural perspective of students, 40% of students are non-native English speakers, greater than 50% are first generation college, more than 66% require financial support, and provision of a wide array of essential student services. Under the Our Curriculum Category, the PRR identifies demands for STEM, growing health careers, students in transition, and updating course and program learning outcomes as the challenges and/or opportunities. Under the Our Faculty category, expertise of faculty, improving the ratio of full-time to part-time faculty, scholarship, and professional growth are identified as key challenges and/opportunities. Finally, the sixth category, Our Technology Environment, identifies the following potential opportunities and/or challenges: identifying new technologies, adopting technology, training faculty and staff, need for more technology in the classroom, making computers accessible to students, and providing adequate data storage. In most categories, it appears to the reviewers that the bulleted lists demonstrate that BMCC has identified how to build on opportunities as well as how to effectively address and meet the challenges.

The Challenge and Opportunity section of the PRR concludes with a brief discussion of the challenges experienced with the upcoming fall 2013 introduction of the CUNY Pathways initiative in all of its undergraduate institutions. Pathways is a new general education plan with a core group of courses to be identified by each college to fit this CUNY framework; these courses will be fully transferrable and will fulfill any other institution’s general education requirements. Pathways will also have an impact on transfer guidelines within the CUNY system. Currently, this directive is presenting a major challenge to some CUNY institutions, including BMCC, whose Senate has passed a moratorium on any curricular actions related to Pathways. At the same time, the BMCC administration has decided that deadlines for meeting the CUNY Pathways initiatives need to be met for the benefit of the students. Thus, this is presenting a distinct challenge.

The reviewers suggest that BMCC take actions to ensure that the College and students do not lose ground in the progress made in embedding and assessing General Education across the curriculum.

IV. Enrollment and Finance Trends and Projections

The PRR notes that two of the fastest growing boroughs in the City are Brooklyn and Manhattan, from which BMCC draws many of its students. Population projections suggest that the number of immigrants is likely to increase, there will be a 13.9% population growth over the three decades beginning in 2000, and the City will experience a decline in the number of school-aged children.

While BMCC is well aware of the impact of population growth on college enrollments, the PRR states that high school and college graduation and retention have had, and will continue to have, a similar impact on college enrollments. In fact, BMCC indicates that these graduations and retentions have contributed to a 40% enrollment increase at CUNY institutions since 2001.
The PRR provides tables and charts depicting an enrollment growth at BMCC of 16% since fall of 2008. Programs with the largest number of students are Liberal Arts and Business, while those with the highest growth are criminal justice and the sciences. The enrollment projection table indicates that, as noted earlier, BMCC is keeping enrollment capped at existing levels in an effort to decrease the challenge to the College’s human and physical resources. Therefore the 2013 to 2015 projections show a 0% growth. Despite these projections, the College has made a concerted effort to hire additional faculty to decrease the growing student:faculty ratio. To that end, since 2008, BMCC has experienced a net increase in full-time faculty of more than 100, despite a significant number of retirements. The PRR states that “the challenges for BMCC in coming years will be to continue to manage enrollment, to evaluate program level enrollment in order best to meet demands of the community, and to maximize utilization of resources while managing costs” (p. 40).

The PRR states that a study conducted by Economic Modeling Specialists Inc. (EMSI) demonstrates that the College plays a substantial role in the local economy, noting that graduates at career midpoint with an associate’s degree earn 35% more than those with a high school diploma. In addition, the graduates realize a 14.4% rate of return on their BMCC education expenditures, expand the state’s economic base, and contribute an estimated $173.1 million to the New York economy annually.

BMCC’s financials are audited as part of the CUNY system and are not audited individually. The auditing firm has issued unqualified opinions for fiscal years 2008-2012, “indicating that the financial data is presented fairly and is in conformity with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles” (p. 42).

The PRR identifies three primary sources of revenue for all CUNY community colleges: the State of New York, New York City and tuition revenues. The PRR indicates that state FTE funding declined about 15% between 2009 and 2013. Tuition revenue at BMCC accounted for 33% of total FY11 revenues, but the College expects to see that revenue source increase through 2015 due to modest tuitions increases approved by CUNY through 2015. In order to provide more secure financial planning CUNY initiated the CUNY Compact in 2006. The Compact addresses maintenance of effort, modest but consistent tuition increases, increased philanthropic contributions, and more efficient operations, the latter of which yielded BMCC more than $600,000 in cost reductions in FY2012.

The PRR provides a table of revenue sources for FY2008-2012 and demonstrated that BMCC’s revenues increased by 85% over that same time frame, due largely to increased enrollments. BMCC’s revenue projections for FY 2013 to 2015 are contained in the PRR and are based on a set of assumptions as well as know tuition increases, anticipated state and city appropriations, and flat enrollment. BMCC projects a net revenue increase of $6.7 million over the same three-year period. The PRR also delineates operating expenses for FY2008 to 2012, with more than 60 percent of each year’s expenses devoted to instruction and institutional support.

According to the PRR, when BMCC receives its revenue allocation at the start of each fiscal year, the budget office prepares a draft plan that “integrates funding for the goals and objectives established by the short-term and long-term planning models” (p. 45). Additional analyses are conducted through the year to ensure spending does not outpace revenues. The PRR notes that about 65% of BMCC’s FY 2012 budget was for recurring and obligatory costs, leaving 25% of the budget devoted to variable costs and providing for sufficient flexibility in the event of a financial downturn.

The PRR states that each department and unit receives a budget allocation at the start of each fiscal year that is tied to both prior expenditures and specific budget requests. Additional requests may be made to the appropriate vice president throughout the year. As noted earlier, capital expenses are planned at the CUNY level and are tied to the Facilities Master Plan. BMCC’s five-year capital request, beginning with FY 2013, totals $36,000. However, the PRR suggests that these numbers will likely change as damage
to the 199 Chambers Street building from Hurricane Sandy in fall 2012 are being documented and repaired.

V. Assessment Processes and Plans

The 2008 Visiting Team had no recommendations regarding Standard 7, Institutional Assessment. However, they had three recommendations for Standard 14, Assessment of Student Learning that led to a Monitoring Report being submitted to and accepted by Middle States in June 2010.

Throughout the PRR, there are repeated references about how the College leadership, faculty, and staff are developing and embracing a culture of assessment across all departments and units. To ensure that assessment is being thoroughly addressed, the College has hired a Dean of Institutional Effectiveness and Strategic Planning and expanded the staff in OIRA. Subsequently, the College has developed a Collaborative Improvement Process that aims to involve all constituencies in the planning, assessment and budgeting processes at BMCC.

The PRR provides references a variety of sustainable training opportunities on assessment that have been provided to departments and units throughout the College and to several on-line resources that are available to any employees who need additional information or refreshers as well as on-line data repositories that have been developed since the 2008 site visit and are available to the entire college community.

According to the PRR, Assessment processes at BMCC are guided by two major plans: the BMCC Comprehensive Assessment Plan and the CUNY/BMCC Performance Management Plan. The BMCC Comprehensive Assessment Plan describes an integrated model for both Institutional and Student Learning Assessment. The plan contains well-developed descriptions of what assessment is and how it should be carried out across both academic and non-academic departments. Various levels and types of assessment are linked to the Strategic Plan goals for which they provide evidence and support. The Plan also identifies timelines for general education and program assessments; discusses linkages between course, program and institutional assessment; and provides all the essential templates needed to complete assessment processes. In addition, the Plan identifies how data from external surveys, such as the Community College Survey of Student Engagement are used within the overall plan.

As noted earlier, the CUNY/BMCC Performance Management Plan is used to measure the College’s utilization of resources against its strategic priorities and assists BMCC in modifying its goals annually. As such, this process is part of the College’s Institutional Assessment.

As for the three recommendations regarding Standard 14, the PRR provides narrative about how each has been addressed. The first recommendation was to have at least 50% of the course syllabi with measurable outcomes and documented evidence they have used the results of assessment to improve instruction. The PRR reports that at the time of submission 64% of syllabi have been revised, exceeding the College’s pace for 100% completion. The reviewers found some evidence of these outcomes throughout the Catalog with links to syllabi from course description pages. The PRR narrative also indicates that data demonstrating “closing the loop” have been analyzed. Supporting evidence includes a schema for the closing the loop process, and several examples were described in the PRR narrative as well as in the 2010 Monitoring Report. However, the data provided were not pervasive.

The second recommendation was to have at least 50% of full-time faculty and chairs trained in assessment of student learning outcomes. The PRR provides a list of internal workshops and training sessions held over the last four years and states that approximately 230 of BMCC’s full-time faculty have participated in these events as of spring 2013. BMCC reports that an additional 80 faculty have attended events on
campus presented by external presenters and or have attended workshops off campus. The PRR notes that training in assessment processes remains an ongoing priority at the College.

The third recommendation regarding Standard 14 was that all department chairs should take responsibility for assessment. Their responsibilities should include communicating and ensuring that all faculty members are engaged in the assessment process. The PRR states that “chairs are held accountable for department progress toward the goal of Standard 14” (p. 34). Specifically, Chairs are expected to hold a discussion about both assessment and general education at every department meeting. They are also required to engage faculty in the assessment process and to work with the departmental assessment committees on closing the loop in course and program assessments. Department Chairs file an annual report with the Office of Academic Affairs that includes course-level assessment reports and progress on program assessments. Finally, Chairs are evaluated on how they are engaging faculty in the assessment of student learning.

The reviewers found some evidence that all three recommendations are being addressed. However, the direct evidence provided with the PRR, as well as through links to other documents, was minimal.

*The reviewers recommend that BMCC continue to implement its Student Learning Assessment Plan, demonstrate that outcomes are assessed across all academic courses and programs, and show how data from the assessments are being used to improve student learning.*

VI. Linked Institutional Planning and Budgeting Processes

BMCC’s Vision, Mission, and Strategic Plan, priorities and critical assumptions are all well documented in the 2008-2013 Strategic Planning Document. This is supplemented by the Strategic Plan Matrix which lists possible approaches for each priority’s objectives as well as key indicators, timelines, key individuals responsible for the approach, and closing the loop indicators. However, the reviewers noted that the Matrix is labeled “Proposed Activities and Indicators for BMCC Strategic Plan: 2010 to 2015”. It is unclear, then, where the College is in its Strategic Planning Cycle and whether the current plan is spanning 2008 to 2013, as noted on the document referenced throughout the PRR, or 2010 to 2015, as noted in the Matrix. At one point, however, the PRR states that “goals are in place through 2015” (p. 50), but the reviewers are not sure how those goals relate to the 2008 to 2013 Plan.

*The reviewers recommend that BMCC ensure that all internal and external documents about the College’s Strategic Plan are consistent in referencing the overall time frames for the current Strategic Plan, including priorities and goals.*

The PRR states that, in the future, a review of the strategic goals will occur twice annually as part of its recently instituted Collaborative Improvement Model. Under this model, the Collaborative Improvement Council (CIC), which represents all College constituencies, is responsible for “informing, stimulating and monitoring strategic planning, assessment, innovation and program improvement efforts across the College” (p. 50). As part of their charge, the CIC uses assessment results to recommend budget priorities to the Executive Cabinet. In turn, the Cabinet ensures that sufficient funds are budgeted to support strategic priorities and objectives. According to the PRR, the College Council Budget Committee (CCBC) also plays a role in developing the College’s strategic goals and recommends budget priorities to the President for funding of both short and long-term planning.

*The reviewers recommend that BMCC fully document the linked Institutional Planning and budgeting processes under the Collaborative Improvement Model and demonstrate to internal and external audiences how planning, assessment, and budgeting are linked.*
VII. Conclusion

The Borough of Manhattan Community College has made progress in a variety of areas since the decennial visit in 2008. BMCC has worked to address most of the recommendations and suggestions posed by the visiting team and has introduced a variety of new processes and procedures to promote assessment at all levels of the institution. At the same time, the College has addressed concerns about space issues by capping enrollment at current levels for the next several years. While the College is making progress, some continued work remains to be done in the areas of demonstrating that assessments have occurred, developing a Technology Master Plan, ensuring consistency among Strategic Planning Documents, and linking institutional planning and budgeting.

A summary of the reviewers’ recommendations follow:

- **BMCC should continue to develop measurable outcomes for its Educational Offerings and institute related program assessment that relates directly to student outcomes.**

- **BMCC should initiate development of a comprehensive Technology Master Plan in the 2013-14 academic year to ensure that technologies are supporting student learning and success as well as BMCC’s Mission and Strategic Plan.**

- **BMCC should continue to implement its Student Learning Assessment Plan, demonstrate that outcomes are assessed across all academic courses and programs, and show how data from the assessments are being used to improve student learning.**

- **BMCC should ensure that all internal and external documents about the College’s Strategic Plan are consistent in referencing the overall time frames for the current Strategic Plan, including priorities and goals.**

- **BMCC should fully document the linked institutional planning and budgeting processes under the Collaborative Improvement Model and demonstrate to internal and external audiences how planning, assessment, and budgeting are linked.**