

Report to the  
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, students

of

GOUCHER COLLEGE  
Baltimore, MD 21204

by

An Evaluation Team representing the  
Middle States Commission on Higher Education

Prepared after study of the institution's self-study report  
And a visit to the campus on March 29 – April 1, 2009

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AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

President/CEO:

Sanford J. Ungar

Chief Academic Officer:

Marc Roy, Provost

Chair of the Board of Trustees:

John M. Bond, Jr.

Retired

Goucher College, 1021 Dulaney Valley Road, Baltimore, MD 21204

**Middle States Commission on Higher Education  
Decennial Accreditation Visit  
Goucher College  
March 29 to April 1, 2009**

**I. Context and Nature of the Visit**

Goucher College, located in suburban Baltimore, is a selective, independent, co-educational liberal arts institution with an enrollment of 2,300 undergraduate and graduate students. Founded in 1885 as the Woman's College of Baltimore City, Goucher is recognized for education that fosters intercultural awareness, community action, and international exploration in all students. Goucher prides itself on the close interaction students have with faculty, on the number of students engaged in service, and on its commitment to environmental sustainability.

Goucher College is an impressively kinetic institution. It combines a continuing commitment to its traditional mission—educating young people in the liberal arts—with energy and innovation. New programs, among them a study abroad requirement that highlights a global context for teaching and learning, are firmly embedded in a liberal arts core. Students at Goucher are invited to immerse themselves in classic disciplines and at the same time asked to engage the world. Such an approach to 21<sup>st</sup> century education is hardly unique, but Goucher's specific initiatives are well considered, fresh, and appealing. Goucher is completing the construction of an Athenaeum for Fall 2009 that will be both a library and a signature building for the campus. Goucher's dreams are large, but its pocketbook is finite. Goucher's immediate challenge in its future will be to meet its distinct and ambitious aspirations, at the same time maintaining its historic quality in the liberal arts.

*Scope of institution at the time of the evaluation:*

- Degree levels: BA in 31 liberal arts disciplines, and selected professional disciplines; M.Ed. in Education (with several tracks), M.A.T. in Teaching, MA in Arts Administration and Historic Preservation; M.F.A. in Creative Nonfiction; Post-Baccalaureate Certificates in Pre-Medicine, Teaching, and Education
- Carnegie Classification: Baccalaureate Arts & Sciences
- Branch campuses: None
- Additional locations: None
- Distance learning programs: Current Statement of Accreditation Status notes three distance learning programs. That status is accurate. There are three master's programs; an additional one to go on-line in January 2010
- Other: Goucher maintains some standard articulation agreements allowing students to transfer credit and/or complete degrees between Goucher and other local institutions

### *Self-study process and report*

Goucher College completed a comprehensive self-study. The process was led by a Steering Committee co-chaired by a senior staff member, a faculty leader, and a staff member. Steering Committee membership was inclusive and representative of the college community, and Working Groups crossed disciplinary and professional boundaries to take leadership roles in areas outside their own expertise. There was broad participation of the community at large in the development, review, and commentary on the report. President Sanford J. Ungar fully supported the open and collegial process. Of special note is the “electronic workroom” that provided all necessary documentation on the web in advance of our visit. The Accreditation Team expresses its appreciation to President Ungar and the Steering Committee for their graciousness in responding to our questions and needs during our visit. We offer very special thanks to Bill Leimbach, Goucher’s Vice President for Technology and Planning and Co-Chair of the Steering Committee, for his round-the-clock support of our work and his excellent planning leading up to the visit. We thank the entire Goucher community for their warmth, hospitality, and responsiveness during our visit.

## **II. Affirmation of Continued Compliance with Eligibility Requirements**

Goucher College is authorized to operate and award postsecondary degrees in the State of Maryland. The institution’s mission is clearly defined and adopted by its governing board consistent with its legal authorization, and is appropriate to a degree-granting institution of higher education. Goucher College offers credit for postsecondary baccalaureate degrees of four years in length, and offers master’s degrees of appropriate length. The College has provided documentation, signed by the President and Board Chair, attesting that the institution adheres to the eligibility requirements, describes itself in identical terms to all accrediting agencies, can be reasonably expected to adhere to accreditation standards and policies, communicate any changes in its accredited status, and that it will make freely available to the Commission accurate, fair, and complete information on all aspects of the institution and its operations. The institution also publishes in its catalog or other appropriate places accurate and current information that describes purposes and objectives, admission requirements and procedures, academic calendars, rules and regulations directly affecting students, programs and courses, degrees offered and the degree requirements, costs and refund policies, grievance procedures, academic credentials of faculty and administrators, and other items relative to attending the institution and withdrawing from it. The institution devotes a sufficient portion of its income to the support of its educational purposes and programs. The institution does not operate interregionally.

### **III. Compliance with Federal Requirements; Issues Relative to State Regulatory or Other Accrediting Agency Requirements**

Based on review of the self-study, certification by the institution, other institutional documents, and/or interviews, the team affirms that the institution's Title IV cohort default rate is within federal limits. The team relied on institutional certification to make its determination. The team is not aware of any issues relative to state regulatory requirements or the institution's status with other accrediting agencies.

### **IV. Evaluation Overview**

The team had the opportunity to review the Self-Study and substantive documentation prior to the visit. We were also able to meet by phone prior to the visit to arrange nearly all of our necessary interviews in advance and to identify further documentation we felt necessary to make our judgments. The team's approach during our visit was to verify and augment impressions gained in our reading of the Self-Study. The campus, including President Ungar and Board members, responded to our questions with openness and candor. It is our belief that Goucher College meets the eligibility requirements and all fourteen accreditation standards of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. What follows is our analysis of each standard, our assessment of significant accomplishments and progress, suggestions for improvement, and recommendations regarding planning, assessment, and enrollment management.

### **V. Compliance with Accreditation Standards**

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

**Goucher College meets this standard.**

#### ***Summary of evidence and findings***

- Goucher College has a strong, clear liberal arts mission with a focus on academic excellence, an interdisciplinary approach, an international outlook, and a commitment to experiential learning. Its programs and practices, including its resource allocation, are directed at fulfilling this mission.
- The mission is reviewed in concert with the development of the strategic plan. Recently the College has developed a set of Community Principles and a Diversity Statement (currently under discussion) that augment the mission. It is expected that these statements will appear in conjunction with the Mission Statement wherever it appears.

- Institutional level goals are well-defined in the Strategic Plan, *Transcending Boundaries of the Map and Mind* (2002). They include goals related to global identity, experiential education, diversity, reinvigoration of community, and construction of the Athenaeum, a central community gathering place for intellectual activity, encompassing a new library.
- The broad goals of the strategic plan explicitly reinforce the liberal arts mission, and institutional activities are clearly directed toward fulfilling the mission through these goals. For example, the goal of internationalization is manifested in the institution's commitment that every student have an international experience, and the goal of reinvigoration of community is apparent in the development of the Community Principles.
- The Community Principles statement describes Goucher's place in the world, and its community members' engagement within and outside Goucher. Its fundamental tenets are respect, inclusion, communication, service, and social justice. It has the potential to be used as a tool for enculturation into the community and as a barometer of community behavior.

***Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices***

Goucher College is to be applauded for taking seriously the importance of mission by its clear efforts to insure that two fundamental qualities for which it strives—community and diversity—are understood and embraced by all.

***Suggestions***

While the Mission Statement does not explicitly refer to undergraduate education alone, the tone of the statement seems to be directed primarily to undergraduate liberal arts education. In its next review of the statement, the institution should consider the inclusion of language regarding the graduate programs.

***Recommendations***

None.

***Requirements***

None.

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

**Goucher College meets this standard.**

***Summary of evidence and findings***

- Goucher College has a clear strategic plan with overall institutional goals and annual goals and objectives. The Strategic Plan, *Transcending Boundaries of the Map and Mind*

(2002) was developed after the arrival of President Sanford J. Ungar, by a committee representative of the campus community and the Board.

- The broad strokes of the strategic plan are ambitious and bold, a clear manifestation of the forward-looking and ambitious leadership of President Ungar. The plan has the buy-in and commitment of the Board and senior leadership, and faculty and students are also committed and supportive of its core goals.
- The Senior Staff has recently adopted a process of sharing and aggregating yearly divisional goals in support of the leading goals of the strategic plan. In this new process, divisional goals are aggregated to form a set of institutional annual goals. The institution also uses a home-grown planning model that tracks a large number of fiscal variables in relation to one another, and a set of dashboard indicators to track performance on broad fiscal, enrollment, and demographic goals. It also uses a benchmark set of peers to compare itself against other liberal arts colleges that are similar and/or direct competitors.
- The aspirational goals of the College are many, and most impact the institution at its financial, structural, and curricular core. While there is very strong commitment to achieving these goals, there is substantial competition for the mental and temporal “planning space” needed to anticipate the widespread ramifications of achieving each goal of the strategic plan.
- There is no existing representative planning group in charge of shepherding the Strategic Plan or the annual operational plan. Implementation depends on individuals operating personally, rather than individuals operating within defined systems.
- While the strategic plan has generated momentum, the short tenure of several Senior Staff and of some key individuals who report to them, have stretched the limits of the administration and faculty. The College needs to move forward quickly and allocate time for deliberative planning.
- The institution’s fiscal planning, controls, and budgeting processes are robust. The next step is to integrate budgeting and planning processes and components, particularly academic planning, faculty growth and composition, and assessment. This integration will allow for greater participation of the Provost as a partner with the Chief Financial Officer in the budgeting process and a greater ability to anticipate the impact of strategic initiatives on heretofore seemingly unrelated aspects of the institution. In its fast-paced environment of ambitious goals and in the current economic climate, Goucher does not have the luxury of unanticipated consequences.

### ***Recommendation***

Goucher College should further develop and adapt its annual planning process to create a functional system that incorporates its financial planning model with annual strategic and tactical planning, and be informed by assessment results.

### ***Requirements***

None.

### Standard 3: Institutional Resources

**Goucher College meets this standard.**

#### ***Summary of evidence and findings***

- Goucher is well served by its clearly articulated mission statement and strategic plan which provide an excellent foundation and context for insuring that the human, financial, facilities, and other resources are available and accessible.
- Goucher's financial resources are strong, as evidenced by its unqualified audit opinion and A- Standard and Poor's rating. There is clear evidence of financial discipline; a commitment to reduce endowment spending to 5.0% over the next 5 years (currently at 5.3%), a sound debt policy, and, in particular, the recognition that this economic situation requires increased vigilance and financial prudence. The finance office keeps close tabs on budget variances and maintains good communication with the campus community. Resources are tight, however, and the unpredictable enrollment situation has made planning very difficult.
- The budget process appears to be fact-based and thorough, as evidenced by the integration of a three-year history of expenses into its future budget planning. In fact, future budget planning assumes flat operating expenses, reflecting an effort to contain non-payroll expenses. Goucher is also exploring consortia opportunities for purchasing through the Maryland Independent College and University Association (MICUA) and is one of 16 campuses in the Baltimore Collegetown Network (BCN) dedicated to working collectively.
- Non-faculty staffing levels are at fiscal year 2000 levels despite the considerable increase in enrollment since 2001. A vacancy justification form has been initiated which requires supervisors to think critically and creatively about filling positions.
- Goucher has an impressive campus with extensive facilities and grounds. The operating budget includes an annual allocation of \$850,000 (that is planned to be increased gradually over time) which is aimed at addressing the \$41 million deferred maintenance backlog. Fundraising goals have been developed and formulated from the strategic plan. Total fundraising is increasing despite a decrease in the alumni participation rate and plans are underway to work with disaffected alumni groups.
- It is clear throughout the Self-Study that Goucher has fully embraced its desire to continue increasing enrollment and improve retention; this theme is reinforced within the academic, financial aid, and institutional planning segments of the report. The strategy to decrease merit-based aid, which has reduced the financial aid discount rate, has been effective, as shown by a decrease in the discount rate from 47.13% in fiscal year 2002 to 35.5% in fiscal year 2007. Goucher is now focusing on strategic use of merit scholarships as a leveraging tool to help bolster enrollment by improving yield.
- The commitment to requiring all students to fulfill a study-abroad experience has helped make Goucher distinctive, but controls need to be established to insure that the budget remains in check.

- The Goucher endowment has performed very well, with performance ranking considerably better than the Cambridge Associates median for all institutions. Goucher ranks in the top decile for the last one-, three-, and five-year periods, when compared to institutions with assets of similar size (\$100-\$300 million). Its investment policy statement is thorough and reinforces the goal of reducing the endowment spending rate over time while at the same time recognizing that endowment income represents 14% of budget revenues.

### ***Suggestions***

- Suggestions for improvement include enhancing the budget process by providing more transparent communications within the Goucher community and more opportunities for campus input to the process.
- It would serve the community and process well if there was more documentation of the linkages between the strategic plan and the budget process. Goucher needs to move in the direction of ensuring that the strategic plan drives the budget.

### ***Recommendations***

None.

### ***Requirements***

None.

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

**Goucher College meets this standard.**

### ***Summary of evidence and findings***

- Goucher College has a strong governance system. Governance responsibilities are clear and documents describe the governance structure, the by-laws, and specific policies governing Board and institutional activities. The Board reviews and revises its policies regularly. For example, the Conflict-of-Interest policy was recently reviewed and updated.
- Various constituencies, including faculty, staff, and students, have the opportunity for input through existing structures, including the College Council. While the Council is not an official part of the governance process, it serves as a broad-based advisory group to the president, often discussing core institutional attributes like mission.
- The Board is self-reflective, highly experienced, and takes its fiduciary and policy responsibilities seriously. While the Self-Study makes note of communication challenges between the Board and the faculty, it appears to the team that the challenges are being addressed through recent work during a retreat of Board leadership, faculty leadership, and Senior Staff. This group has appointed a small subset of itself to continue these discussions and make recommendations.

- One characteristic feature of Goucher College is that the students appear to have a very strong and personal role in governance, particularly through their relationship with President Ungar.
- The staff, on the other hand, while enjoying a collegial relationship with the President as well, feel somewhat marginalized in the official governance process. Repeatedly, staff who are alumni of Goucher told us that they felt more included as students than they do as staff.

***Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices***

The Board and the Faculty are to be applauded for their recent efforts to enhance communication between these two groups.

***Suggestions***

The College should continue to evaluate how to include staff members in governance processes in a way that recognizes their essential role.

***Recommendations***

None.

***Requirements***

None.

**Standard 5: Administration**

**Goucher College meets this standard.**

***Summary of evidence and findings***

- The Provost, five Vice Presidents, the Special Assistant to the President and Director of Government and Community Relations, the Executive Director of Communications, and the General Counsel report directly to the President. The Provost and the VP for Student Life have joint responsibility for new student programs; other reporting lines are also conventional and appropriate.
- The President's professional background is compelling and is even touchingly described. His energy level and engagement resemble that of a new president, not one in office for eight years.
- The Provost's position was created in 2007 to replace the Vice President and Academic Dean.
- A new Vice President for Development and Alumnae/i Affairs is highly successful and is playing a key role on Senior Staff.
- In February 2007, the Vice President for Enrollment Management left the college and some of his former responsibilities were redistributed. In June 2008, a new Vice

President for Enrollment Management was hired and the responsibility for coordinating retention efforts was added to his responsibilities.

- The new chief technology officer (2002) is now the Vice President for Technology and Planning and his office has absorbed the Office of Institutional Research.
- There is a new Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs in the Academic Affairs Division.
- Although most of the Senior Staff is satisfied with the effectiveness of communications amongst their group, some voiced a need for more cross-pollination and team work.
- The President and Senior Staff develop annual performance and planning documents and objectives, as well as individual self-evaluations. All these documents are reviewed by the President and by the President with the Compensation Committee of the Board of Trustees.

### ***Suggestions***

A concerted effort should be aimed at increasing the hiring and retention of historically underrepresented staff at all levels, adopting best practices and innovative approaches.

### ***Recommendations***

None.

### ***Requirements***

None.

## **Standard 6: Integrity**

**Goucher College meets this standard.**

### ***Summary of evidence and findings***

- The publication of documents for internal and external constituencies involves significant attention to providing accurate, detailed information.
- The College's policies and procedures appear to be carried out with consistency and fairness.
- Members of the college community have clear avenues to pursue appeals and grievances in hiring or disciplinary matters.
- *Faculty Legislation* clearly establishes the Faculty's authority over the curriculum and its role in institutional governance. The legislation reflects the standards of the profession and upholds the principles of tenure and academic freedom.
- College policies for faculty, students, and staff are published in the *Campus Handbook*, *Academic Catalogue*, and employee handbooks, which are updated regularly.
- College policies appear on the College's web site, where they are easily accessible by the entire campus community.

- Alleged violations of the Academic Honor Code are heard by the Academic Honor Board, which is composed of students and faculty and coordinated by the associate dean for undergraduate studies whose role is to guarantee fairness and adherence to protocol.
- The College seeks to demonstrate its commitment to intellectual freedom through support for faculty scholarship and a variety of campus events and activities.
- The Board's recent revision of the faculty employment policy was undertaken without recognition of the faculty's role in this matter. Subsequently, the board took steps to involve the faculty, which resulted in a revision of the policy that was mutually acceptable.

***Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices***

- The Board of Trustees revised the college's bylaws (2006), gathering information from peer institutions in order to incorporate best practices.
- The Board and Faculty resolved a difference over the faculty employment policy. (A revised version of Faculty Legislation, with the revised faculty employment policy, was approved by the Faculty and ratified by the Board in 2008.)

***Suggestions***

- The College should consider instituting a periodic review of the Academic Honor Code to be assured that the code is clearly understood, consistently and fairly applied, and effective.
- The College should continue to take steps to improve understanding among the board, administration, and faculty of their respective rights and responsibilities.
- Goucher uses a unique method of calculating student-to-faculty ratio (neither the Common Data Set nor IPEDS methodology). The consequence is that its advertized 9.6 to 1 student-to-faculty ratio overstates the extent of faculty resources available to students by comparison with peer institutions. The College may want to use its methodology for internal planning purposes, but should use a standard methodology in advertising brochures, on its website, and in any public place where IPEDS/US News & World Report numbers are expected. The standard methodology also will be helpful to Goucher in benchmarking its investment in teaching resources relative to student enrollment.

***Recommendations***

None.

***Requirements***

None.

## Standards 7: Institutional Assessment

**Goucher College meets this standard.**

### ***Summary of evidence and findings***

- An assessment process demonstrates through data, surveys, and accomplishments that there is a cycle of continuous improvement and analysis that underpins the planning process.
- The Goucher assessment process occurs in a variety of ways across the campus. Academic department assessment had been facilitated by the Institutional Research office and is now moving to the Provost's office. The Student Life area performs a variety of assessment-related initiatives aimed at both first-year and upper-class students. In the Development area, goals are clearly tied to strategic objectives and a variety of metrics are used to assess progress. Nevertheless, these processes are not mature.
- Assessment also occurs at the Board of Trustees level with its own program of self-assessment. On an institutional level, the President has initiated the use of a "dashboard" or score card that measures several institutional indicators at specific time intervals. This is used as a tool for monitoring performance and modifying the strategies for accomplishing Goucher's goals and objectives. This "dashboard" is also made available to the Board of Trustees. The Institutional Research office also maintains a Fact Book of relevant data that is used for decision-making. Similarly, these processes are not mature.
- In the finance area, a variety of financial metrics (e.g. endowment spending rate, debt ratio, discount rate) are monitored and used to inform budget and planning decisions. In enrollment management, several performance benchmarks are tracked to assess the attainment of enrollment management goals.

### ***Suggestions***

- As noted in Standard 2, the institution needs to further integrate its planning, budget and assessment processes.
- *The Goals, Projects and Initiatives Report* could be improved by listing outcomes that could be achieved upon completion of a project.

### ***Recommendations***

None.

### ***Requirements***

None.

## Standard 8: Student Admissions and Retention

**Goucher College meets this standard.**

### *Summary of evidence and findings*

- Admissions policies support and reflect the mission of Goucher College. In addition to evaluating the academic preparation of potential students, policies and practices are in place to honor the College's mission in the awarding of financial aid, especially through need-based awards.
- Both qualitative and quantitative admissions criteria are clearly defined and disseminated. Admissions policies, including information regarding academic programs, are available to prospective students both in print and on the website. Furthermore, students may inquire about the criteria and policies by contacting or meeting with admissions or financial aid staff and with program directors for graduate students.
- Under the auspices of the Educational Opportunity Program, financially disadvantaged first-generation college students in Maryland are admitted. A special summer bridge program is in place to support their transition, and ongoing support is offered. General academic skills assistance is provided by trained student mentors and/or professional staff at the Academic Center for Excellence.
- Prospective students have access to information regarding the learning outcomes of the General Education requirements and the aims and objectives of the various majors via the Academic Catalogue. Prospective graduate students can access program-specific details and information regarding knowledge, skills, and dispositions fostered in students in the Graduate Programs in Education Student Handbook.
- Also available is comprehensive information and advice regarding financial aid, scholarships, grants, loans, and refunds. The College distributes a significant amount of its own money in aid to undergraduates.
- Students can access published and implemented policies and procedures regarding transfer credit and credit for extra-institutional college-level learning. The College participates in the Articulation System for Maryland Colleges and Universities which facilitates transfer-credit evaluation.
- Student retention is monitored and coordinated by the division of enrollment management. There is a director of new student programs to engage first-year students. First-year courses and advisors, a first year experience portal webpage, Goucher Guides, and Academic Progress Reports, among other efforts, are employed to help ensure student success. Current retention rates have improved, but are still lower than institutional aspirations.

### ***Suggestions***

- Address the suggestions for improvement and recommendations made in the Self-Study regarding student admissions, especially improving retention, achieving diversity goals, and ensuring accurate portrayal of the Goucher experience to prospective students.
- Develop a comprehensive enrollment plan/strategy which coordinates recruitment, retention, enrollment growth, incoming class size and diversity, student “fit,” discount rate, admissions operations, and financial aid operations.

### ***Recommendations***

Effectively analyze why students leave the College and update the action plan to improve retention, especially as related to admission practices.

### ***Requirements***

None.

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

**Goucher College meets this standard.**

### ***Summary of evidence and findings***

- The College offers student support services which are reflective of the institution’s commitment to experiential learning and the fundamentals of a broad liberal arts education. The Student Life division was recently reorganized, and positions were added across the institution to meet students’ needs. With the physical and organizational infrastructure in place, there is an opportunity to continue upgrading the policy, procedure and communication structure.
- Qualified professionals are in place to supervise and provide student support services and programs.
- Student needs are addressed by an array of procedures, services, and co-curricular activities. A newly created office devoted to multicultural programming and issues expands these services. Policies are distributed in many formats.
- Undergraduate academic advising is conducted by matching faculty members with incoming students and by major once declared. Graduate advising is performed by the faculty in the programs. Online Academic Progress Reports for first-year students provide academic information to those who can assist students having difficulty.
- The institution recently moved conferences within NCAA Division III to align better with like institutions in terms of size and academic profile. The athletic program is administered by the same academic, fiscal, and administrative principles, norms, and procedures that govern other institutional programs. Non-athletes have access to athletic and recreational facilities and opportunities. Growth in athletic and recreation programs has been met by expansion of facilities both actual and forthcoming.

- Procedures for addressing student complaints or grievances are adequate. The records of student complaints or grievances are maintained by the Office of Community Living unless the complaints are specifically academic in nature, in which case the records are maintained by the appropriate associate academic dean. Written policies explaining procedures for maintenance and release of student records are published. Employee training regarding the release of student information is required.
- Ongoing evaluation of student support services is done through a variety of surveys (e.g. NSSE, CIRP, CORE Institute Alcohol and Drug Survey). Results of evaluation are used to guide program development. However, measurable learning outcomes for the various services and programs need to be further developed for the entire division.

***Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices***

The Community Principles document provides a foundation for community building activities and policies across the institution.

***Suggestion***

Address the suggestions for improvement and recommendations made in the Self-Study regarding student support services.

***Recommendations***

The institution needs to develop and assess measurable learning outcomes for students' co-curricular experience.

***Requirements***

None.

**Standard 10: Faculty**

**Goucher College meets this standard.**

***Summary of evidence and findings***

- The faculty at Goucher College are appropriately credentialed and committed to teaching, scholarship, and service. The growth plan for faculty is attempting to ensure that the faculty is sufficiently numerous to fulfill their roles appropriately. Institutional supports are in place for the advancement and development of faculty. Standards and procedures for evaluation and promotion of tenure-track faculty are clear and reasonable.
- Some full-time faculty with term appointments carry significant service and advising responsibilities and feel a sense of long-term commitment to Goucher. The lack of regular evaluation for full-time non-tenure-track faculty deprives them of opportunity for recognition and reward.
- Faculty members report significant overcrowding in office space, with as many as three faculty members sharing one office. This interferes with their ability to carry out all their

responsibilities, including advising. The new departmental report requested by the Provost enumerates faculty course responsibilities.

### ***Suggestions***

- Address the suggestions for improvement and recommendations made in the Self-Study regarding the faculty, particularly those on term appointments.
- Begin a space-planning initiative to address inadequate faculty offices.
- Adoption of a 4-4 course load for students and 3-2 course load for faculty warrants serious consideration. A study of costs and benefits and examination of practices at similar liberal arts college may show that the conversion will serve the interests of students and faculty alike.
- A concerted effort should be made to increase hiring and retention of faculty from historically underrepresented groups, adopting best practices and innovative approaches.

### ***Recommendations***

None.

### ***Requirements***

None.

## **Standard 11: Educational Offerings**

**Goucher College meets this standard.**

### ***Summary of evidence and findings***

- The educational offerings are congruent with the mission and foster a coherent student learning experience. The institution has undertaken ambitious curricular initiatives, including a study-abroad requirement for all undergraduates and a new general education curriculum. New graduate programs are planned for the near future.
- An independent observer's visit to a representative three-week Intensive Course Abroad in Honduras revealed high quality programming, high levels of faculty competence, and exemplary pre-departure activities.
- The undergraduate curriculum consists of a first-year program including an interdisciplinary first-year seminar (Frontiers) and a College Writing Proficiency requirement, general education requirements, revised in 2006 and 2007, and a major. The programs offer significant opportunities for students to pursue independent creative and research work.

***Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices***

- Goucher has attracted national attention for its signature study-abroad requirement, including a \$1,200-per-student stipend. Faculty have created three-week Intensive Course Abroad options that are innovative and intriguing, and constructed with care to ensure integration into the academic-year curriculum.
- Several of Goucher’s graduate programs are distinctive and taught by specialized faculty of high caliber.
- The Athenaeum will provide distinctive opportunities for enhanced learning, community building, and student engagement.

***Suggestions***

As the Athenaeum opens, we encourage discussion of collaborative staffing models to foster information literacy and technological competency.

***Recommendations***

None.

***Requirements***

None.

**Standard 12: General Education**

**Goucher College meets this standard.**

***Summary of evidence and findings***

- Over the past seven years, three successive Curricular Transformation Groups (CTG’s) have worked to reshape and revitalize the curriculum. Their intention was to revise the general education requirements so that they would better connect student learning to real-world experience, broaden the College’s international perspective, and strengthen its interdisciplinary connections.
- Although two of the resulting eleven general education requirements -- those in writing and foreign languages – necessitate student testing to demonstrate proficiency, the remaining nine are more generally described in terms of the students’ participation in a variety of learning experiences . For example, students may satisfy the requirement to “acquire problem-solving and research capability” by enrolling in courses deemed appropriate to this intention and approved by the Curriculum Committee. The actual learning outcomes are not directly assessed.

***Suggestions***

Planning for the full integration of the study abroad requirement must be linked to the budget in the coming years, especially if students are increasingly choosing semester options that have implications for financial aid and community living.

**Recommendations**

None.

**Requirements**

None.

**Standard 13: Related Educational Activities**

**Goucher College meets this standard.**

**Summary of evidence and findings**

- Goucher offers eight post-master's certificates in education through the Graduate Programs in Education (GPE). These certificate programs are integrated with the companion master's degree programs. The Reading Instruction and School Improvement Leadership programs are approved by the Maryland State Department of Education for state certification.
- Goucher offers three distance-learning graduate degrees and is preparing to expand its online offerings with new graduate programs in Cultural Sustainability and Digital Arts.
- Goucher's service-learning program offers numerous opportunities for students and faculty to incorporate a community service component into academic courses.
- Goucher offers a highly regarded Post-Baccalaureate Premedical Program.
- Goucher's students are able to pursue numerous academic (i.e., for credit) internship opportunities.

**Significant accomplishments, significant progress, or exemplary/innovative practices**

The Post-Baccalaureate Premedical Program has an excellent success rate in students being accepted into medical school.

**Suggestions**

- Goucher is well positioned to become a leader in the use of service-learning for liberal arts education. Given the prominence of experiential learning in its mission statement, the College will want to explore further opportunities in the Baltimore area to use service-learning to enrich its students' educational experience.
- Since internship courses are implemented at the departmental level, the College should assure regular and ample opportunity for the staff in the Career Development Office and the faculty to share their observations and to work together to maintain adherence to academic internship policies.
- Since Goucher's students express some frustration with finding available faculty to advise and sponsor their academic internships, further thought should be given to providing sufficient faculty resources in support of this program.

- Goucher should continue to take steps toward more effective delivery of its distance-education courses -- ensuring that best practice guidelines are applied to all distance-education courses and that the programs have adequate resources.
- The team supports moving expeditiously to complete a comprehensive, strategic analysis of Goucher's graduate programs and operations. Further expansion of the graduate programs should be undertaken only if the college is confident it can provide the necessary resources. Budgets and staffing for these programs should reflect an appreciation of the requirements of an entrepreneurial program such as the Welch Center for ongoing marketing and course development.

### ***Recommendations***

None.

### ***Requirements***

None.

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

**Goucher College meets this standard.**

### ***Summary of evidence and findings***

- As with most institutions of higher education, assessment at Goucher College has taken hold more rapidly and effectively in some areas than others. The resulting mixed assessment picture reflects relative strengths in administrative evaluation and academic programs, but comparative weakness in effective academic student outcomes assessment and the assessment of Student Life programs.
- The Assessment of Student Learning chapter (XIV) of the Goucher Self-Study attests to the intention to follow and implement the guiding principles described in *Characteristics of Excellence*. In this way, it demonstrates the College's good-faith efforts to create and support a successful, ongoing academic-assessment culture. Progress in learning-outcomes assessment has been slow, however.
- As the Self-Study notes, since 2005 only the departments of Education, Physics, Dance and Theater have implemented student-learning outcomes protocols linked to departmental goals and objectives. This year, under the direction of a new Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs, the institution's attention is focused on developing similarly effective student-learning outcomes activities in Biology, Art, and Women's Studies, with faculty ownership of student-learning outcomes assessment the primary institutional goal.
- Further, the institution is attempting to link the outcomes of the assessment of student learning with Academic Program Reviews "in the hopes of creating a more meaningful and comprehensive assessment vehicle." (Goucher S-S p. 180.)

- The faculty is considering the creation of an Academic Assessment Committee. This committee will hold the key to the development of successful student academic learning assessment.

### **Suggestions**

The institution should assure that all student learning outcomes programs at all levels (course, department, program, division, etc.) are brought to the forefront of institutional concerns and appropriately supported.

### **Recommendations**

The institution should *implement* a documented process to assess the achievement of student learning goals; the assessment of the General Education Program should be a top priority.

### **Requirements**

None.

## **VI. Summary of Recommendations for Continuing Compliance and Requirements**

### **Overview**

The team believes that Goucher College currently meets all standards for accreditation. The team has also made four recommendations for Continuing Compliance. *For the sake of clarity in the report, we have cited these recommendations under the four standards to which they apply directly. We believe, however, that the recommendations for Standards 2, 9, and 14 all relate to the interaction between assessment and planning, and are thus components of a single recommendation to fully implement assessment plans in both curricular and co-curricular areas, and to integrate effectively assessment results with planning and budgeting.* We also recommend, relative to Standard 8, that Goucher College develop and implement a clear and effective retention plan.

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

*An institution conducts ongoing planning and resource allocation based on its mission and goals, develops objectives to achieve them, and utilizes the results of its assessment activities for institutional renewal. Implementation and subsequent evaluation of the success of the strategic plan and resource allocation support the development and change necessary to improve and to maintain institutional quality.*

Recommendation: The College should further develop and adapt its annual planning process to create a functional system that incorporates its financial planning model with annual strategic and tactical planning, and be informed by assessment results.

**Standard 9: Student Support Services**

*The institution provides student support services reasonably necessary to enable each student to achieve the institution's goals for students.*

Recommendation: The institution needs to develop and assess measurable learning outcomes for students' co-curricular experience.

**Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning**

*Assessment of student learning demonstrates that, at graduation, or other appropriate points, the institution's students have knowledge, skills, and completencies consistent with institutional and appropriate higher education goals.*

Recommendation: The institution should implement a documented process to assess the achievement of student learning goals; assessment of the General Education Program should be a top priority.

**Standard 8: Student Admissions and Retention**

*The institution seeks to admit students whose interests, goals, and abilities are congruent with its mission and seeks to retain them through the pursuit of the students' educational goals.*

Recommendation: Effectively analyze why students leave the College and update the action plan to improve retention, especially as related to admission practices.