

The Circle Special Edition



MARIST COLLEGE, POUGHKEEPSIE, NY

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Marist begins Middle States Review Oct. 25

by CAREY ALLABAND

A visiting team of faculty and administrators from 11 colleges and universities in the Northeast will arrive on campus on Sunday, October 25, 1992, to evaluate Marist as part of the Middle States Association's ten-year reaccreditation process. The primary purpose of the visit is to study the College's analysis of its own work, as represented in the recently completed institutional self-study. The Middle States team will be on campus through Wednesday, October 28, during which time they will be meeting with faculty, administrators, and students to discuss the self-study and its assessment of the College's programs and activities.

Based on a report prepared by the team following their visit, the College's response to the report, the self-study itself, and the team's recommendations, the Commission on Higher Education will decide on whether Marist should be reaccredited for another ten years.

"There is no doubt that Marist will be accredited again," according to Dr. Mark Sullivan, executive vice-president of Marist College, "Marist has fully demonstrated in its self-study that it is adhering to the Characteristics of Excellence adopted by Middle States as part of the assessment process."

The team will have reviewed the self-study prior to their visit and determined which areas to focus on during their stay. The team's primary goal is to examine the academic program, organization, administration, facilities and resources for their effect on the teaching and the learning process according to "Designs For Excellence, A Handbook For Institutional Self-Study."

The team is made up of 11 faculty and administrators from institutions within the Middle States Association region which includes



Admissions, housed in Greystone, was one of the areas examined in the recent self-study. Circle photo/Matt Martin

New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland and Delaware. Dr. David Rubino, President of Gannon University in Erie, Pennsylvania, chairs the team.

The team members are selected in a variety of ways. One way Middle States chooses team members is to match the unique programs of an institution with the backgrounds

of visiting team members, according to Sullivan.

The College has been working on its self-study for about two years prior to its publication in September 1992. The self-study was completed under the direction of a Steering Committee headed by Sullivan and Dr. Ed O'Keefe, a professor of psychology at Marist.

There were 18 subcommittees besides the Steering Committee. Each subcommittee represented one of the 17 Characteristics of Excellence utilized by Middle States. An additional committee dealing with Institutional Advancement was also created.

The 18 committees were as follows:

1. Mission, Goals and Objectives
2. Integrity, Equity and Diversity
3. Planning and Resource Allocation
4. Program and Curricula
5. Outcomes and Institutional Effectiveness
6. Admissions
7. Student Services
8. Faculty
9. Organization and Administration
10. Governing Board and Governance
11. Budgeting and Accounting
12. Library/Learning Resources Center
13. Other Resources/Technology
14. Plant and Equipment
15. Innovation and Experimentation
16. Catalogs, Publications, and Other Promotional Materials
17. Institutional Advancement
18. External Programs

The committees which consisted of over 100 faculty, administrators, and students, spent a full year gathering information and holding open meetings. They, in turn, reported their findings and recommendations to the Steering Committee which reviewed committee reports and wrote the final version of the self-study document. Through the process of reviewing, discussing, and editing, O'Keefe stated that, "as honest a job and balanced appraisal as possible of the College's strengths and weaknesses was achieved."

Each chapter in the Self-Study consists of a general introduction, a description of the programs and services under each category, the strengths and weaknesses, and recommendations for improvement.

The recommendations made at the end of each chapter are actually strategies for improvement and will serve as benchmarks for re-evaluation by Middle States ten years down the road, according to Sullivan and O'Keefe.

Partial list of recommendations — library addressed

The following is a partial list of the recommendations made in the Self-Study:

The Library

1. The College should continue to increase the level of budget support for the acquisition of library materials, particularly necessary to maintain the level of periodical and reference database purchasing begun in 1990.

4. The library's bibliographic instruction program should be broadened to reach all students at the beginning of their major course work and at the capping experience in order to improve student use of the library.

5. The College should increase the clerical and professional staffing of the library to enable materials processing to keep pace with the needs of faculty and students and to implement a comprehensive bibliographic instruction program.

6. The College should construct a new library building.

Technology and Other Resources

3. The College should analyze and refine its procedures for allocating computer equipment and make certain that these procedures are well publicized on campus.

Faculty

1. The number of full-time faculty should be enlarged to meet the commitments expressed in the Strategic Plan for 1990-95.

2. An effort should be made to fill new faculty lines primarily by women and minorities.

3. All new faculty should have the requisite credentials and teaching experience in hand at the time of hire.

4. The College should work to see that adjunct faculty are more incorporated into the campus community and are properly supervised.

Organization and Administration

1. In light of the phenomenal growth of the College in the past ten years, outcomes research should be applied to evaluate the effectiveness of Marist's organization and administration.

2. The perception exists that there should be a strengthening of the academic voice in the decision-making process at the highest levels of administration of the College. Analysis should be undertaken to determine whether this is the case. If it proves to be a problem, efforts should be made to see that the academic voice is strengthened in the decision-making process.

Governance and Governing Board

2. Where necessary, the divisional structure should be modified to strengthen the disciplinary faculty in their deliberative role and to empower them in their relationship to the academic administration.

7. The newly constituted Student Government should make greater student involvement more feasible. Steps should be taken to better communicate the operations of Student Government to the student body at large.

Student Services

1. Attention should be paid to the needs of minority students on campus and to sensitizing the entire campus community to live in a culturally diverse world.

6. Plans for expansion of the McCann Center should be considered in the near future to accommodate increased student use.

7. The College should carefully monitor the fiscal impact of its expansion in Division I athletics to determine the effect of these increased costs on other institutional needs.

8. The College should re-examine its current course schedule in an effort to find at least one time slot during the week that could be held free of classes so that clubs and organizations might be encouraged to meet

with faculty advisors at a time convenient to all.

Integrity, Equity, and Diversity

2. Attention should be paid to the issue of promoting women to higher levels of institutional responsibility, to hiring minorities for administrative positions, and insuring comparability of compensation.

Admissions

1. Marist should explore new and creative approaches to helping families, particularly those in the middle-income range, finance their educational expenses.

8. While there is no evidence of uneven admissions standards because of the existence of different entry points into the College, those administrators involved in the admissions process should periodically check to ensure that standards for admissions are not being applied differently.

External Programs

7. The College should address the academic and administrative computing needs as well as computer support requirements of the external programs in the same systematic fashion as found on the main campus.

8. Funds in the library budget should be routinely earmarked to improve library services to students in external programs — especially in the correctional facilities.

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Selected excerpts from the Marist Self-Study

Introduction

Since the last Middle States Self-Study in 1981, Marist College has experienced extraordinary growth in enrollment, facilities, academic breadth, and stature. Although the number of traditional students (ages 18-22) attending college during the 1980s declined nationally by 13 percent, Marist full time enrollment increased 135 percent.

While growth, it is difficult to identify a single factor behind this dramatic growth any observers point to our academic program development and our physical expansion as the most likely reasons. With enrollment growth has come significant physical expansion. Since 1980 the College has embarked on a major building and renovations program to accommodate additional students and support its primary academic thrusts. Projects completed include the Lowell Thomas Communications Center, home of our communications center and computer science/math programs; the Dyson Center, a classroom and office building serving our management, social sciences, and public policy programs; and Donnelly Hall, which houses the Division of Sciences and the Computer Center. Future initiatives will include a new library, campus center, and housing units.

We believe the Self-Study reflects the significant progress we have made as an institution of higher learning since the 1981 Middle States assessment. As we look toward the next ten years, we hope the analysis contained in this report will hasten planning activities to ensure even greater improvement in the years to come.

Self-Study Process

In late Fall 1990 in preparation for the Middle States Self-Study, Marist President Dennis Murray (after consultation with senior faculty and administrators) asked Dr. Ed O'Keefe, Professor of Psychology, and Dr. Mark Sullivan, Executive Vice-President, to serve as co-chairs of the Study. Eleven other faculty and administrators were then appointed to a steering committee, and in Spring 1991 work began in earnest.

Therefore, eighteen subcommittees were formed to correspond with the seventeen Characteristics of Excellence developed by Middle States. To obtain the widest input possible, each subcommittee was co-chaired by a faculty member and administrator, and composed of faculty, administrators, staff, and students. The Steering Committee drafted charges for each subcommittee, made these available to the campus community, and appointed a liaison from the Steering Committee to each subcommittee. At a retreat in January 1991, details of the Self-Study design were discussed with faculty and administrators; particular emphasis was placed on the importance of outcomes assessment in analyzing data that would enable us to determine the College's strengths and weaknesses in each respective study area. In general, the methodology used by the various subcommittees in responding to their charges was to (1) examine all pertinent documents, evaluation reports, survey instruments and statistical data and (2) conduct interviews with key persons involved in each of the eighteen areas.

Opportunities to provide input occurred at open meetings held by each subcommittee during Fall 1991; at a faculty retreat in January 1992 that focused on the preliminary reports of the Curricula, Faculty, Admissions, and

Outcomes subcommittees; and at an open meeting on the Self-Study draft document in May 1992.

Subsequent to the latter meeting, the draft was reviewed, critiqued, and revised by the Steering Committee in July 1992. The Marist Self-Study Report, therefore is the Steering Committee's synthesis of a two-year community-wide analytical process.

Major Findings

As would be expected, many and varied findings on the strengths and weaknesses of the College emerged from this comprehensive Self-Study. The Self-Study concluded that while the Strategic Plan has served as a good foundation for this analysis and has widespread support throughout the College, its specific objectives need to be reviewed annually and adjustments made in response to changing external and internal conditions. Members of the community need to be continually encouraged to keep the mission and goals of the College in focus as revisions to the Strategic Plan and departmental operating plans are proposed.

the library.

Outcomes assessment of programs and curricula

Since issues related to the Core/Liberal Studies Programs have been long-standing, they will need prompt attention in the months ahead. Although assessment has been attempted, the College is unsure of the extent to which the Core/Liberal Studies Program is meeting all of its stated objectives.

Marist has been fortunate over the past ten years in attracting an increasing number of students whose demographics are much more varied than in the past. To a degree this is a mixed blessing, for while student diversity contributes to cultural diversity it has placed, and will continue to place, a financial strain on the College. The Self-Study determined that more financial aid will be needed by all students and, in particular, by the minority, international, and adult students that we are recruiting in greater numbers — and at a time of severe federal and state cutbacks in financial support. The Self-Study also noted that there is a

its financial stability in the decade ahead: Marist's heavy dependence on student tuition as its major source of revenue must be lessened, however, which will place greater fiscal responsibility on the Advancement Office to increase annual fundraising and the size of our endowment.

Most faculty perceive teaching to be their primary function and realize that promotion and tenure are inextricably connected to excellence in this regard. Other issues such as teaching and compensation equity still need to be addressed.

The campus is considerably more spacious and physically attractive than at any time in its history. Several new academic and administrative buildings have helped solve the classroom and office space problems, and the new or expanded facilities for natural and computer science, fashion design, communication arts, management studies, and social/behavioral science have enhanced these academic programs. While a variety of housing options are available to students, too many of them still reside off-campus. The planned

the retention of minority students. Programs presently in place may need to be expanded.

Technologically

Technologically, Marist is one of the most sophisticated liberal arts institutions in the country — thanks in large measure to its relationship with IBM. Even the library, which always seems to get more than its fair share of criticism (less deserved than ever, however) is recognized as technologically advanced with the DOBIS, PROQUEST, DIALOG, and other software systems available to students and faculty. Marist is fortunate to have a very active governing board that interfaces well with the faculty and administration. The Board of Trustees self-assessment pointed out a need for even greater two-way communication with the faculty, particularly on academic matters, and perhaps with student leaders. The Self-Study determined that administratively the College functions well, with the lines of communication clearly established and open. Academic matters securely in the hands of the faculty, with the decision-making process in other areas well defined.

Financial Scene

Financially, the College appears to be in good shape for the present — but potential problems have already been mentioned. Concern has been expressed regarding the allocation of resources particularly with respect to academics. Self-Study found that Marist is very much in line with comparable institutions. Problems related to the budgeting process have been identified and changes have been pro-

posed to resolve them. The formation of a Budget Priorities Committee (composed of four senior executives and four senior faculty) to

advise the President on annual budget priorities should link the Strategic Plan, operational plans, budgeting process, and the external funding environment more explicitly.

This committee insures a greater faculty voice in the budgeting process. It is clear that many of the previous assumptions made about the College's strengths and weaknesses have been brought in this

self-evaluation. It is also clear that a more systematic approach to outcomes assessment must be initiated to substantiate the gains anticipated from this Self-Study.

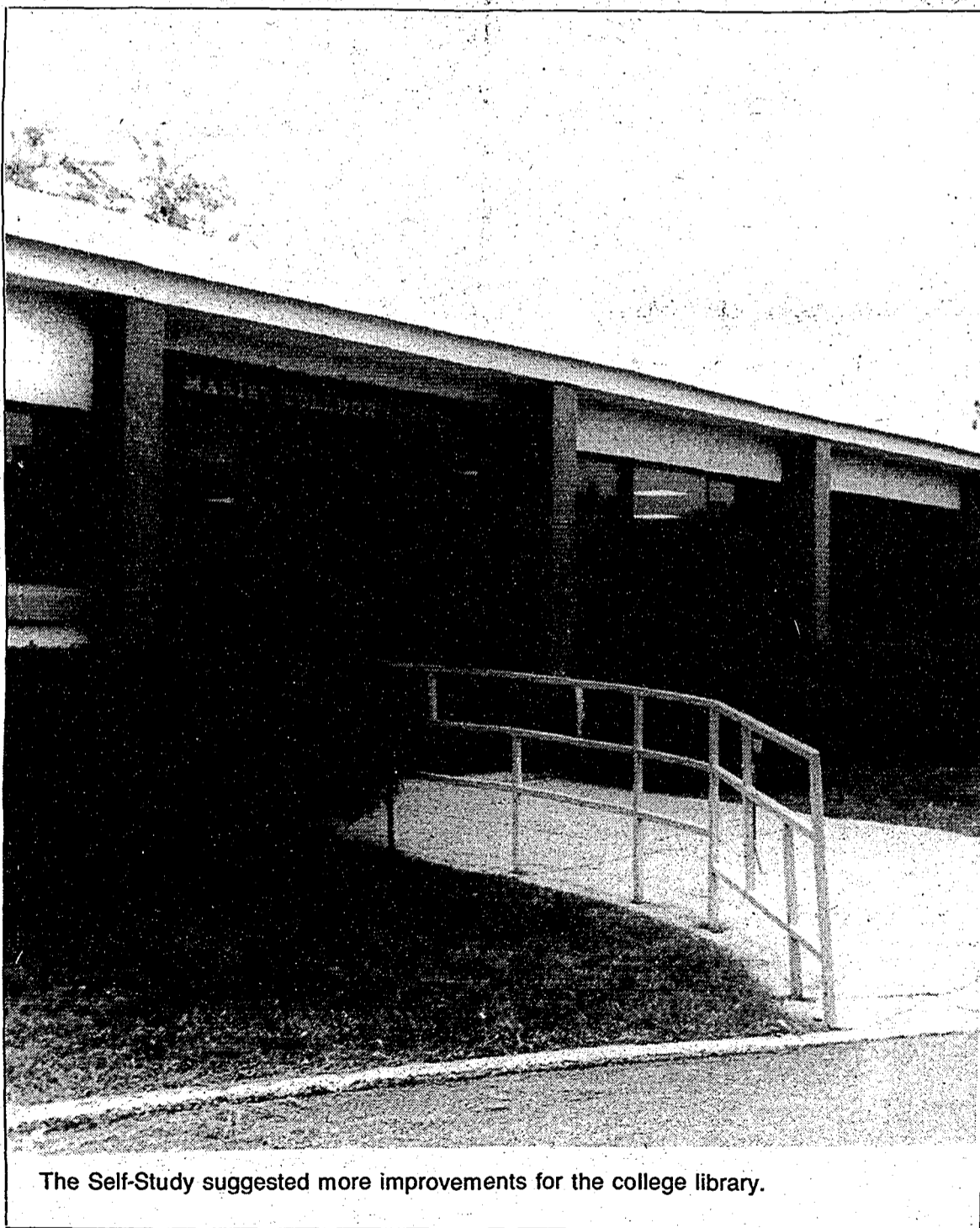
The Steering Committee also suggests that a system be developed to monitor the implementation of the recommendations contained in this report through the ongoing Strategic Planning process.

In conclusion, we can only hope that in the year 2000 when the College is beginning to prepare for its next self-study, an external observer as distinguished as

Carnegie Foundation President Ernest Boyer will echo the comments he made in 1990 following a visit to Marist. To quote Dr. Boyer, "I think that Marist con-

tinues to demonstrate the superb blend of, on the one hand, the utility of knowledge, and on the other hand, a response to the deepest yearnings of the human spirit. It is

an institution that confronts the odds and demonstrates the unbeatable combination of visionary leadership and dedicated faculty."



The Self-Study suggested more improvements for the college library.

The academic direction and functioning of the College received close scrutiny during the Self-Study with particular concerns being expressed relative to the following areas:

- Core/Liberal Studies Program
- Institutional support for individual initiatives
- Resource allocation for Graduate Education
- Programming for cultural diversity
- External academic programs
- Support services, particularly

need to increase the number of full-time faculty (particularly women and minorities) and support personnel to serve this more culturally and academically diverse student body. Given the necessity for a new library and residence hall, the unavailability and upgrading of equipment and facilities, the need for additional faculty, and the continued diversion of financial resources for student aid to counter state cutbacks (\$2 million in the past two years), a major challenge to the College will be to maintain

residence hall/townhouse/student center project will resolve this and related space problems when completed in 1994.

Support services that address the personal and academic challenges faced by an increasing number of students have been responsible in part for the better than average retention statistics reported by the Office of Institutional Research. However, persistent efforts will be needed to aid the more diverse student population to transition successfully to college and to improve