

Baltimore City Community College: A Long Way to Go

Two Years Yield Few Meaningful Reforms, Underscore Deep-Seated Challenges Facing City Residents' Largest Provider of Post-Secondary Education

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Foreword

: This report is the work of many hands. The findings are the result of nearly three
: years of inquiry and hand-on study and research by consultants engaged with
: Baltimore City Community College, most notably Molly Rath, a veteran writer and
: researcher on education issues. This effort has been guided by the involvement of
: many in the educational community, including members of the administration and
: faculty of Baltimore City Community College. To all of them, The Abell Foundation is
: grateful. The purpose of the report is to share with the community and its leader-
: ship the status of the College and its current challenges—in the hope that in airing
: them, we can assist in solving them.



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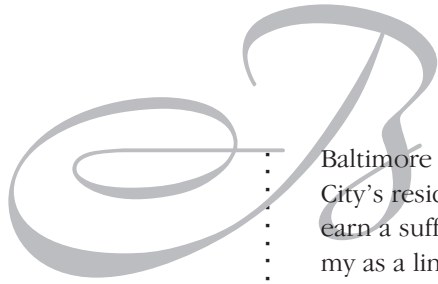
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Introduction



Baltimore City Community College (BCCC) is the only chance for many of Baltimore City’s residents to obtain a post-secondary education, land a decent-paying job, and earn a sufficient income to support a family. BCCC is also critical to the local economy as a linchpin in Baltimore’s ability to build a competitive workforce. Yet Baltimore’s largest provider of post-secondary education (with 7,300 credit students) graduates fewer than 270 students each year, a reflection of the insufficient academic foundation that students bring to the college. BCCC has historically struggled to move students through its developmental or remedial program—review courses in math and English that 94 percent of new enrollees require—and of those students who do make it through and go on to college-level courses, many fail to realize their goal of obtaining a certificate or degree. Students who apply to the nursing program, for example, have already completed their remedial courses, yet preliminary exams and courses show that many are still unable to perform the basic skills taught in BCCC’s developmental courses.

At the same time, BCCC represents a sizable State investment. Unlike other Maryland community colleges, which rely on the State for just one-third of their public funding and local governments for the rest, BCCC receives two-thirds of its public dollars directly from the State. Much as it did with Baltimore City’s district courts, the State assumed funding responsibility when it took over BCCC. Add to these State dollars local and federal support, and 70 percent of BCCC’s annual budget—a projected \$76 million for FY 2005—is taxpayer-funded. Yet this State funding is not linked to any kind of State oversight, a situation that has been particularly apparent in the last two years as BCCC has made little progress in its recent attempts at reform. These failures to strengthen BCCC and move it forward have, in turn, severely limited the returns on taxpayer’s substantial investment in the institution.

Given both the sizable stakes of a successful BCCC, and the college’s inability to fulfill its potential, it is the conclusion of this report that there need to be significant changes at BCCC, starting with its Board of Trustees.

A. Background

In the late 1970s, Maryland’s community colleges and their remedial programs came under the scrutiny of the now-defunct Maryland State Board for Community Colleges, sparking a continuing debate about how best to deliver basic skills instruction in Baltimore City—home to the State’s largest concentration of under-prepared post-secondary students.

The 1979 State report on the scope and quality of remedial programs available to students found that remedial offerings at the school, then known as the Community College of Baltimore, were more extensive than at many of its fellow institutions, but so was the need.¹ The college was spending more than twice the statewide average

for community colleges on remedial education, and its students accounted for 25 percent of Maryland’s remedial community college population. In the wake of the 1979 report, the college took its first hard look at remedial instruction, formally in place since 1969, and found its program lacking on numerous fronts. A 1980 internal report billed basic skills courses in reading, writing and math as the “primary route into the college for hundreds of low-scoring students each year.” Yet the same report noted that the college had no “unified program of basic skills [with] a system of accountability, authority and evaluation.”²

Another State report in 1986 described the struggle of community colleges as open-access institutions, characterized by the daunting mandate to admit anyone and everyone with a high school diploma or a GED and, at the same time, achieve high student success rates. In its wake, Baltimore’s community college again set out on a reform mission.³ It requested funding from the Baltimore-based Abell Foundation to conduct “a comprehensive assessment of [its] Developmental Studies Program,” which, according to BCCC’s 1987-88 course catalog, was “designed to help students achieve success in college.” The evaluation, conducted by Community College of Baltimore faculty and staff, revealed the college’s continuing struggle to move students through the process that had come to be known as “developmental” education.⁴ BCCC’s testing and placement processes were riddled with problems, developmental placement rates were consistently high, and pass rates were low, particularly in math.

Subsequent efforts to reform the college’s developmental program included one major attempt in the mid-1990s using a \$1.7 million federal Title III grant.⁵ Each time, these reform efforts zeroed in on developmental course placement, math remediation, and low developmental pass rates overall—and each time they resulted in recommendations for a major overhaul of BCCC’s developmental offerings. This decade of scrutiny culminated in 2002 with another report funded (and this time researched) by The Abell Foundation. This time the news was grimmer and the consequences greater. Little had improved in a decade at what is now called Baltimore City Community College. In fact, things had gotten worse: Instead of hundreds of students being affected, as the college had reported in 1980, there were now thousands.

The Abell report *Baltimore City Community College at the Crossroads: How Remedial Education and Other Impediments to Graduation Are Affecting the Mission of the College* was researched in collaboration with BCCC and published in March 2002. This report noted that BCCC, with two large campuses and several satellite locations, serves more than 20,000 credit and non-credit students each year, and is positioned as a potential launch pad for thousands of students moving into the workplace or on to a four-year college. Fully 97 percent of BCCC graduates are either employed or pursuing their education—most in Baltimore City—making BCCC a critical pipeline for local workforce growth and development. Finally, because BCCC

enrolls 37 percent of Baltimore City’s college-bound public high school graduates, it is an indispensable post-secondary institution for the city.⁶

Yet over the years BCCC has not figured prominently on the public radar. Nor has its unfulfilled potential: graduation rates have continued to decline over the last decade, severely obstructing the college’s stated mission to provide a world-class workforce. In 1992, BCCC awarded a record 445 Associate degrees; in 2000 it awarded 261, a 41 percent decline over eight years—a rate that has remained constant through 2003.⁷

This juxtaposition of substantial promise and limited success propelled The Abell Foundation to publish its 2002 report, recommending reforms within BCCC and promoting the community college’s potential as a workforce provider within the Baltimore community.

The Foundation, in the interest of pressing for institutional reforms and systemic change, went a step further, supporting BCCC in gathering the information necessary to fulfill the recommendations. Following the report’s publication and with BCCC’s blessing, the Foundation hired a consultant to delve into issues raised by the report, and to provide full-time research support to BCCC with the goal of increasing student success rates in lasting, measurable ways that would bear results in the near term.

This report concludes the consultant’s work at BCCC, drawing on research and reform initiatives of the last two years, and profiles the extent to which The Abell Foundation and BCCC’s shared goal of cultivating higher student success rates has been realized. In so doing, the report places current reforms within the context of the last decade, since the college’s first days in its incarnation as Baltimore City Community College.

B. Overview

Founded in 1947 as Baltimore Junior College and a branch of Baltimore City’s public school system, BCCC has in its six decades in existence undergone structural, name and governance changes.⁸ All this while it also struggled against the social and economic tides that since World War II have left Baltimore a smaller, poorer city—with all the attendant public health and educational problems, but minus the manufacturing base that once employed its undereducated citizens. By the late 1980s, BCCC, financially strapped and plagued by poor student performance, was on the brink of closing. Yet because the college was viewed as critical to Baltimore City’s economy, the State agreed to take it over in 1990, making it the only State-sponsored community college in Maryland. After a review period, Maryland granted the college permanent status in 1992, when it assumed its current name. Since then, BCCC has been in a state of continual financial and organizational adjustment while continually grappling with how best to serve the unique needs of the City’s citizens.

Throughout the last decade the college's role within the City has become more focused. In its evaluation of BCCC in May 2003, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education asserted that the college has finally "arrived at a place in its history where it can seriously address many of the challenges it has faced and, most importantly, be the vital link and bridge between the citizens of the City of Baltimore and the new opportunities of the 21st Century." The college's students, meanwhile, "see BCCC as a gateway to a future they desperately seek," the Middle States evaluation asserts. "This is an institution that has had its share of challenges; yet, the potential and the willingness is all in place for it to rise to another level of excellence."

This assessment of BCCC's potential has been unanimously embraced by outside critics. A June 2003 report by James L. Fisher Ltd., which conducts institutional reviews for universities and colleges around the country, bills BCCC as "a vital link to educational and economic opportunity . . . especially for Baltimore's African American citizens . . . [and] a primary post-secondary portal for a majority of Baltimore residents."¹⁰ Over the last two years, these external reports combined have laid out recommendations for how BCCC can—and data showing how it must—fulfill such a critical role. The City's workforce development potential and the future of thousands of its citizens depend on it; so does the college's own future, as private and neighboring institutions vie more aggressively for the City's post-secondary population.

Moreover, BCCC is poised in new ways for change. Two years of extensive review and new leadership have created momentum. Thanks to a high-profile dispute between the faculty and administration as well as a major administrative shakeup last fall, the college is now very much in the public eye. After a decade of declining graduation rates and developmental pass rates, BCCC also has much to prove—a tack it took in the wake of the Abell report two years ago, as it once again pledged to improve its most tangible student performance measures. This time, however, BCCC also vowed to implement not just academic, but also institutional reforms to realize lasting change.

Using two years' worth of qualitative and quantitative data (student performance data; State and national statistics and trends; organizational, policy and administrative changes; and formal and informal interviews and feedback from BCCC's many constituencies and stakeholders), this report outlines the changes that have occurred at the college since 2001, discusses the extent to which reforms are actually taking root, and assesses the impact of these on both students and on the college. The report:

- describes BCCC today, chronicles the many forms of momentum that have demanded and driven recent reform efforts, and discusses the many factors that have impeded and delayed these endeavors;

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- details BCCC’s major reform projects, efforts, and milestones of the last two years, from reorganizing its academic departments to building partnerships with Baltimore’s health care community;
 - discusses the implementation (and impact so far) of various reform efforts; and
 - highlights the college’s developmental mathematics and Allied Health and Allied Human Services programs (Nursing in particular) as prisms revealing BCCC’s response to internal and external challenges and its ability to fulfill its mission to “educate and train a world-class workforce for Baltimore.”¹¹

In short, this report shows where BCCC is headed. It discusses the stakes and consequences of ill-conceived changes at a critical time for both BCCC and Baltimore City, and persistence of the status quo with respect to student success rates. Most importantly, this report combines facts, data, analysis and public scrutiny in an effort to steer BCCC in a direction that will make it a more effective force for higher education and employment in the City’s future.

C. Summary of Findings

Despite a noble vision and ambitious goals, BCCC’s current reform effort is off to a slow start, requiring the college to respond quickly if it is to attain the credibility and support it will need to succeed.

How Much Has Changed? What the Data Say

The March 2002 Abell report was based on student performance data through the 1999-2000 academic year (some 2000-01 data were included). This report picks up where the prior report left off, adding two, and in some cases three years’ worth of data and updating five- and 10-year trends. Two to three years of data may not yield a definitive measure of progress, particularly in years marked by turmoil and change. The last few years, however, offer up some quantitative indicators that are both encouraging and cautionary.

There has been no growth since the 1999-2000 academic year in the number of Associate degrees awarded (261 in 1999-2000 versus 261 in 2002-03) and a small decline in the number of certificates awarded (84 in 1999-2000 versus 80 in 2002-03).¹² At the same time, developmental pass rates have increased in the last three years, most significantly in mathematics. Yet developmental pass rates overall at BCCC remain low, averaging 53 percent for English and 36 percent for math over the last five years, from 1998-99 through 2002-03.

Key Changes: More Discussion Than Substance

Many of the issues raised in the 2002 Abell report were not new: generally, its conclusions and recommendations resonated with BCCC leaders, faculty and staff. Though detailed publicly in the report, most were the same issues BCCC employees, State officials, post-secondary accrediting teams, and community college experts had been discussing for a decade or more. When the college again set out in 2002 to respond to calls for change, it was clear what had to happen, and where to begin.

However, the strategies and supports crucial to successful reform have been absent in the last two years. Many of the key changes BCCC embraced have not materialized, including some that required few if any additional resources and/or outside approval; of those that have materialized, most have been beset by poor implementation. Once areas of need were identified, an inertia or loss of focus, has invariably set in.

The Real Gatekeepers: Leadership, Accountability and Communication

Problems in the areas of developmental math and developmental course placement have long hurt students' odds of success at BCCC. More recently, the inconsistency of leadership, accountability, and communication needed to achieve reform has thwarted progress.

What might surely be regarded by some as a lack of leadership for most new initiatives hints at a larger and troubling trend, starting with BCCC's Board of Trustees and spanning both its administration and academic divisions. As a result, programs have been chosen on individual judgment, not on best practices research and data; program planning has been poor and accompanied by last-minute implementation; and no formal evaluation exists to track programs. An overall lack of accountability pervades. Divisions and differing conceptions of the Board of Trustees' role among Board members, the President's own complex relationship with the Board, and a strained relationship between the administration and faculty that has been marked by public hostility all offer strong evidence that the leadership to take BCCC to a new level is still lacking. Absent strong leadership, particularly at the Board level, accountability is also lacking.

At the same time, information about policies, changes, and initiatives does not reach the BCCC community, and in the last year, this failure has created an atmosphere where distrust among key college constituencies has been exacerbated.

Conversations with and observation of the people who lead BCCC on a daily basis suggest that the rough start toward reform in the last two years is not due to lack of willingness to change. BCCC's administration has taken big risks and implemented

bold initiatives, all with the best intention: to benefit BCCC students. Issues of strategy, style and politics, however, have consistently obstructed that goal and threatened student progress.

The Bottom Line

Student performance data are among the key measures of BCCC's educational success. Yet it is too early to gauge the effectiveness of the last two years' reforms by looking solely at student performance through December 2003. Moreover, it is difficult to draw conclusions about student progress from the data provided by the college for Fall 2003, the semester when most major reforms were implemented. Finally, conclusions based solely on student data are myopic, for they do not take into account critical qualitative measures. Rather, a combination of qualitative and quantitative data offer the best barometer of the college's success with reforms.

An array of measures for the last two years shed much light on where BCCC is and where it is heading. So far, there have been few enduring indicators of upward momentum when it comes to increasing students' rates of success.

II. The Last Two Years: A Climate for Change, of Challenges



A. Two Years of Opportunities and Challenges Cement Expectation For Change

The public attention that BCCC has commanded in the last two years, combined with internal administrative shifts, has laid the foundation for significant changes at BCCC.

A Timeline of Events and Decisions That Have Fueled the Recent Push To Reform BCCC

- July 2001:** Abell Foundation preliminary study given to BCCC; BCCC collaborates with in-depth report.
- March 2002:** *BCCC at the Crossroads* published; Abell Foundation consultant begins.
- April 2002:** BCCC's new VP of Academic Affairs in place.
- May 2002:** Ad Hoc Committee on the Reform of Developmental Education forms; Abell report BCCC at the Crossroads presented to BCCC Board of Trustees; consultant gives BCCC report on math standards and placement issues.
- June 2002:** Dr. James Tschechtelin, President for 12 years, retires.
- August 2002:** BCCC's new president, Dr. Sylvester McKay, arrives.
- September 2002:** Pilots to deliver computer-based developmental English and math instruction via Academic Systems software are launched.
- November 2002:** BCCC/Consultant observe the Academic Systems remedial software program at Cuyahoga Community College (Ohio).
- November 2002:** Consultant drafts strategic priorities for BCCC.
- January 2003:** *Set Up To Fail?: The First-Year Student Experience at BCCC* published by The Abell Foundation; Academic Systems pilot revamped for Spring 2003.
- February 2003:** BCCC decides to create developmental studies division.

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- March 2003:** Consultant’s report on SAT cut scores/placement presented to BCCC.
 - April/May 2003:** Middle States Commission on Higher Education conducts once-a-decade evaluation of the college; presents findings and recommendations.
 - May 2003:** Formal inauguration of BCCC’s President McKay; BCCC announces it will create an academic master plan to guide all strategic planning and academic policies.
 - May /June 2003:** Academic VP leaves; interim VP for Learning appointed.
 - June 2003:** BCCC decides to use Academic Systems software as the curricula for all developmental courses.
 - July/August 2003:** Dean’s position created to head developmental division; search begins; names of finalists for the position forwarded to administration.
 - August 2003:** New developmental English and math departments created; new faculty criteria set for teachers, including the requirement of a master’s degree; developmental reading courses folded into developmental English courses; new chairs for most academic departments appointed.
 - September 2003:** Fall 2003 semester begins; new developmental studies division launched.
 - October 2003:** Six members of management team fired, including three of five Vice-Presidents; Board of Trustees chair resigns in wake of dismissals.
 - December 2003:** Interim VP for Learning fired; dean of Arts and Sciences tapped as acting VP.



B. BCCC Today

BCCC's Reach: Whom Does It Serve?

In recent years, through significant leadership changes, BCCC has persevered in its quest to broaden its reach across Baltimore City. The Liberty Heights campus serves the vast majority of its 7,300 credit students and remains BCCC's institutional hub. It is currently undergoing major upgrades and renovations. At the same time there is talk of expanding, bolstering the profile of, and possibly relocating the Harbor campus to increase BCCC's downtown presence. The Business and Continuing Education Center (BCEC), which serves an additional 13,000 non-credit students in workplace settings and at its own downtown facility, continues to grow. BCCC officials have worked steadily to establish a presence in northwest Baltimore with both continuing education and credit offerings at its fast-growing Reisterstown Plaza site. Negotiations are also underway to open new community-based sites with targeted BCCC offerings around the city.

Fueling this expansion trend has been a recent increase in enrollment after a decade of periodic enrollment declines and overall stagnation. BCCC has enjoyed steady enrollment growth during the first years of the current decade, with increases far exceeding those of most other Maryland community colleges. From Fall 2001 to Fall 2002, enrollment among its credit students jumped 13 percent—an increase matched or surpassed only by Allegany Community College (13 percent) and Cecil Community College (14 percent). Most of the State's community colleges, meanwhile, registered enrollment increases of 4 percent to 6 percent. Growth continues at BCCC, but at a more modest 3 percent in Fall 2003.¹³

Reflecting longtime State and national trends, a majority of BCCC's credit students are female (74 percent), attend college part-time (67 percent) and work while in school (72 percent; 44 percent full-time).^{14,15} With respect to other student and enrollment trends across Maryland's 16 community colleges, however, BCCC diverges from the norm.

Among the State's public two-year colleges, BCCC has the largest concentration of African American students—81 percent—and is one of only two community colleges in Maryland with a majority African American student population; 76 percent of students at Prince George's Community College are African American. BCCC is one of just six community colleges where students enrolled in career programs outnumber those in transfer programs, and it leads the State on this measure. In Fall 2003, 62 percent of BCCC students were enrolled in programs designed to prepare them directly for the workplace, while 22 percent were enrolled in programs designed for transfer to a four-year university or college (17 percent were undecided).¹⁶ Statewide, transfer students outnumbered career students 45 percent to 34 percent in Fall 2002 (20 percent were undecided).

Finally, while career programs in the health services arena are increasingly popular at all Maryland community colleges, BCCC boasts the highest percentage of health services enrollment: 47 percent of its career students are either enrolled in, or intend to enroll in, health services programs, compared to an average 35 percent statewide; only Frederick Community College (49 percent), Chesapeake Community College (48 percent) and Harford Community College (44 percent) approach or exceed BCCC's health services numbers.¹⁷ Programs in public service are second most popular at BCCC, capturing 23 percent of the college's career enrollment, followed by business and commerce, at 16 percent.

The vast majority of BCCC's continuing education enrollment is split almost evenly between literacy students (those taking English as a second language, GED, or pre-GED classes) and contract training participants who access BCCC programs through various City and State government agencies, including the Mayor's Office for Employment Development; not-for-profit organizations, such as Goodwill Industries and Empower Baltimore Management Corp.; and private-sector employers. A much smaller percentage comprises "open enrollment" students, those who take classes for their own professional development or continuing education. By contrast, open enrollment students constitute a majority at most Maryland community colleges and drive their continuing-education operations.

How Today's BCCC Credit Students Are Faring

- **Degrees and Certificates**

BCCC awards Associate degrees for completion of its two-year, 70-credit programs, and certificates for those credit programs that require approximately 45 credits and are designed to take one year to complete.

During the first half of the 1990s, the college awarded an average of 400 Associate degrees and 80 certificates annually. The number of certificates awarded held steady throughout the second half of the decade and beyond, but the number of degrees awarded fell dramatically from 442 in 1994-95 to 257 in 1998-99 (42 percent in four years) and has changed little since. BCCC awarded 261 Associate degrees in 1999-2000; 260 in 2000-01; 262 in 2001-02; and 261 in 2002-03.

**Number of Certificates and Degrees Awarded,
Spring 1991 Through Spring 2003¹⁸**

| | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 |
|-------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Associate Degrees | 397 | 445 | 418 | 356 | 442 | 361 | 403 | 310 | 257 | 261 | 260 | 262 | 261 |
| Certificates | 38 | 78 | 126 | 78 | 97 | 87 | 82 | 74 | 88 | 84 | 78 | 66 | 80 |
| Total | 435 | 523 | 554 | 434 | 539 | 448 | 485 | 384 | 345 | 345 | 338 | 328 | 341 |

The most notable declines over the last decade have been among transfer students pursuing Associate degrees in General Studies (87 degrees in 1991-92 versus 47 in 2001-02) and Business Administration (25 degrees in 1992-93 versus 11 in 2001-02); Nursing students (52 degrees in 1991-92 versus 31 in 2001-02); and prospective Human Services Assistants (16 degrees in 1991-92 versus 6 in 2001-02).¹⁹

- **Developmental Placement**

The significant challenge BCCC faces in educating academically underprepared students continues to surpass that of other Maryland community colleges. The percentage of first-time students requiring remediation upon arrival at BCCC increased significantly during the 1990s, though it has fallen slightly in recent years. At the same time, the overall number of students requiring remediation continues to rise. In Fall 1993, the percentage of entering students requiring remediation in at least one subject—reading, English or math—based on placement test scores was 84 percent, or 1,378 students.²⁰ By Fall 1999, that number had risen to 97 percent, or 1,577 students, but has since begun to inch downward. In Fall 2000, 96 percent, or 1,495, required some kind of remediation; in Fall 2002, 94 percent, or 1,787, required remediation.²¹

**Percentage of BCCC First-Time Students Who Require Remediation, by Subject,
Fall 1999 and Fall 2002²²**

| Need Remediation In: | Fall 1999 Enrollees | Fall 2002 Enrollees |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|
| Math + Reading + English | 61 % | 67 % |
| Math + Reading | 8 % | 4 % |
| Math + English | 12 % | 10 % |
| Math only | 15 % | 11 % |
| Reading + English | 0 % | 1 % |
| Reading only | 0 % | 1 % |
| English only | 0 % | 0 % |
| Total Requiring Remediation in One or More Areas | 96 % | 94 % |
| Total Requiring No Remediation | 3 % | 5 % |

In recent years, meanwhile, the actual amount of remediation required by new students has also increased. In Fall 1999, 61 percent required remediation in all three areas: reading, English and math. In Fall 2000, that number increased to 65 percent, and by Fall 2002, it had reached 67 percent. The percentage of students requiring remediation in math has declined from 96 percent in Fall 1999 to 92 percent in Fall 2002, but the percentage of those requiring remediation in both reading and English has risen from 69 percent to 73 percent, and 73 percent to 78 percent, respectively.

These rates are high. According to the Maryland Higher Education Commission, 32 percent of Maryland community college students require remediation in reading, 34 percent require remediation in English, and 52 percent require remediation in math.²³

- **Developmental Pass Rates**

Pass rates for developmental courses at BCCC have increased in reading, English and math during the five years from Fall 1998 through Fall 2002. While the five-year trends show that overall improvement has been inconsistent and thus less dramatic, the increases are encouraging, particularly in the area of math.

Percentage of BCCC Students Who Passed Developmental Courses by Level, Fall 1998 and Fall 2002; Five-Year Trend, Fall 1998 – Fall 2002²⁴

| Semester Course Number* | Mathematics ²⁵ | | | Reading ²⁶ | | | English ²⁷ | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|-----|-----|-----------------------|-----|-----|-----------------------|-----|-----|
| | 80 | 81 | 82 | 80 | 81 | 82 | 80 | 81 | 82 |
| Fall 1998 | 28% | 31% | 41% | 64% | 51% | 55% | 55% | 54% | 52% |
| Fall 2002 | 40% | 36% | 46% | 69% | 60% | 61% | 59% | 65% | 56% |
| 5-Year Trend | 32% | 31% | 41% | 66% | 56% | 58% | 56% | 59% | 53% |

Developmental pass rates for Fall 2003 continued the upward trend, and again, especially in math. According to BCCC’s 2003 Data Book, released in December, the pass rate for MAT 80 rose from 40 percent for Fall 2002 to 48 percent for Fall 2003, but the Fall 2003 pass rates for MAT 81 and MAT 82 were omitted due to the “high percentage of incomplete grades.”²⁸ Meanwhile, in March 2004—after students who either failed or received “incompletes” in their developmental math courses were given a chance to essentially retake the courses through a special winter session program—college officials re-released Fall 2003 pass rates for all developmental math courses, all of which were significantly higher than in Fall 2002. Because of discrepancies between these different sets of the college’s own data, and because it is unclear what the March data entail and how they were calculated, Fall 2003 pass rates were not used for purposes of analysis. A later section in this report expands on these findings.

Meanwhile, the overall success rate of developmental students at BCCC remains discouraging and disproportionately low. According to the administration, 460 students took the same developmental course for the third, fourth or fifth time in Fall 2003.²⁹ By contrast, 84 percent of community college students statewide pass their first developmental math and English courses, according to the Maryland Higher Education Commission.³⁰

C. Climate for Change

The last two years have presented BCCC with many changes, and opportunities to use those changes, to leverage meaningful reforms.

The 2002 Abell Report

In March, 2002 the Abell Foundation published *Baltimore City Community College at the Crossroads*, documenting low rates of student success and identifying the barriers that prevent students from obtaining certificates or degrees and transferring to four-year colleges. Among the report's highlights were the following:

- BCCC graduation rates are low and falling. In 1996, the college awarded 432 Associate degrees, and in 2000 it awarded 259—a 40 percent decline in four years.
- More than one-third of incoming students arrive directly from Baltimore City high schools.
- Students arrive at BCCC woefully unprepared: 96 percent place into developmental English, reading and/or math; 65 percent require developmental course work in all three areas.
- Students are handicapped by BCCC's computerized placement test, which is difficult to negotiate and tests higher math skills that are not taught in high school or required for college.
- Pass rates for developmental courses are low. Only one-third of students typically pass MAT 80 (arithmetic), a course into which nearly half of incoming students place.
- There is a gap between Maryland's K-12 math requirements and expectations of Maryland colleges. The State requires that all two- and four-year college students master "Intermediate Algebra" (the high school equivalent of Algebra II and some trigonometry), yet it only requires Algebra I, Geometry, and one other unspecified math course for high school graduation.

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- Student supports and services at BCCC are uncoordinated and do not meet the myriad social, emotional, academic, and economic needs of students.

Based on these findings, the report recommended reviewing BCCC’s mission; overhauling developmental studies, particularly math; strengthening student supports; and bridging the gap between the college and Baltimore City’s public schools. These findings and recommendations were distributed throughout the BCCC community as well as to State K-12 and higher education officials, the Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS), elected officials, area non profit organizations and the public. Although BCCC had spent much of the 1990s collecting similar data, at times even drawing similar conclusions, the Abell report placed BCCC and its challenges in the public eye as its long-term President was retiring, heightening the potential for change.

Abell Foundation Consultant

The external evaluation of its programs coupled with the pressure that comes with public exposure gave BCCC some of the leverage it needed to solicit support for widespread reforms. To support this process, The Abell Foundation offered to provide an external research consultant to the college at the Foundation’s expense. From March 2002 through December 2003, the consultant worked with the college, participating in reform activities, providing continual research support, and working to help administrators focus on improving the performance of BCCC students.

Specifically, the consultant worked with BCCC officials, faculty and staff on internal projects and committees; established useful contacts among, and worked with, State higher education officials and other community college leaders in Maryland and around the country; participated in partnerships with outside organizations in an effort to strengthen BCCC’s ties to the Baltimore community; worked independently to identify strengths and weaknesses within the college’s operations and structure; conducted “best practices” research among model two-year colleges; and continuously provided the results of this research in the form of data, regular memos and comprehensive reports to the college to inform its decisions.

Middle States Evaluation of BCCC

Every 10 years the Middle States Commission on Higher Education extends accreditation to post-secondary institutions, and every five years it conducts a more streamlined evaluation called a Periodic Review Report. According to commission literature, a Middle States evaluation is “a long-range process designed to help an institution analyze its functions, appraise its educational effectiveness, and discover means by which its work can be strengthened.”³¹ The evaluation has two parts: self-study carried out over several months, often years, by an institution’s academic community that serves both as an internal assessment tool and as a background guide for visiting

evaluators; and a visit by academic colleagues to the institution, charged with evaluating it, and, pending their findings, making a recommendation to renew or withdraw its accreditation status.

In 2003, BCCC's accreditation came up for renewal. In May 2003 accreditation was renewed with conditions, and recommendations centering on the need to revisit BCCC's mission, engage in strategic planning related to that mission, and improve accountability and communication channels collegewide.³²

Fisher Report

In Spring 2003, BCCC hired locally-based higher-education consultant James L. Fisher to conduct a "complete evaluation of the institution and individual performances" and "look at how we do things; our mission; what we say we are going to deliver; how we deploy resources; how we can reorganize staff; what institutional/management style is better; and . . . every recommendation the college has received within the last two years," according to the minutes of the May 2003 Board of Trustees meeting. The Fisher report itself states more specifically its charge: "To assess the general condition of the college from an objective and uninvested but informed perspective. It was felt that a completely objective assessment would candidly identify and address issues affecting BCCC and help establish a tentative agenda for the immediate future." While the report offered little in the way of new information it, like the Abell and Middle States reports, made the case for extensive reforms at the college, and issued recommendations.

New President

In June 2002, BCCC's president of 12 years, Dr. James Tschechtelin, retired, bringing to a close a unique era in the college's history. Dr. Tschechtelin presided over the college as it transitioned from a City-run institution to a State-run agency almost entirely dependent on State funds.³³ As such, he assumed more of an external role at BCCC than that of day-to-day academic manager, a role facilitated by his extensive government relations and lobbying experience that considerably raised BCCC's profile among key constituencies. While Dr. Tschechtelin's replacement, Dr. Sylvester McKay, also had experience in research and policy, he had led community colleges as well, as vice president of curriculum and instructional technology at Guilford Technical Community College in North Carolina and as President of the College of the Albemarle, part of a larger North Carolina community college system.³⁴

Dr. McKay represented another significant change for BCCC, as the majority-black institution's first African American president since it came under State control in 1990. This and his administrative and academic experience at community colleges

spurred the expectation among many that BCCC would, under new leadership, rethink and revamp how its does business to increase student success.

D. Climate of Challenges

Momentum for change aside, BCCC has faced challenges in the last two years—some real, some perceived—that have influenced its decisions about which changes to make, and the pace at which it has pursued them.

BCCC’s Biggest Challenge: Underprepared Students

The external focus on BCCC of late has centered on its historic struggle to educate underprepared students. It is important to reiterate the unique depth and scope of this challenge.

As a community college, BCCC is an open-access institution charged with taking students of all academic and skill levels, and providing them the necessary education and skills to accomplish their educational and professional goals. Where BCCC differs from most, however, is in the very low skill levels that accompany not just many, but a majority of its students upon arrival.

At no other community college in Maryland do nearly 100 percent of students arrive with remedial needs, and two-thirds with remedial needs that are pervasive—in reading, English and math. Statewide, one-half of community college students require math remediation, one-third require remediation in English and one-third require remediation in reading. Moreover, remedial programs at most community colleges comprise a necessary refresher or expansion of previously-learned high school-level concepts that allow students to succeed at the college level. At BCCC, much of the remedial coursework entails starting from scratch—teaching students to read, write and compute for the first time.

BCCC’s Board

The Board of Trustees has ultimate authority at BCCC, and the independence it won when the college became a State-run entity makes it uniquely powerful among Maryland higher education boards. In recent years, however, it has acted in ways that are not always authoritative, setting a tone of weak accountability institution-wide.

According to the Annotated Code of Maryland, BCCC’s Directors are appointed by Maryland’s governor “with Senate advice and consent.”³⁵ Historically, few would dispute, that this is not the way the system has worked: Baltimore City/State delegation has made recommendations to the governor, and the Board has often served as a de facto reward system for legislators’ allies, supporters and friends.

The Board is comprised of nine volunteer members (including one BCCC student) who serve six-year terms that are renewable in all cases (except that of the student member who serves only one year). According to State law, the Board’s charge is twofold: to “exercise general control and management of the College and establish policies to effect the efficient operation of the College, [and] appoint a President of the College who shall be the Chief Executive Officer of the College and the Chief of Staff for the Board of Trustees.” In other words, the Board must make policy, and ensure that the president implements that policy and executes the mission of the college.

Where the Board diverges from most other boards of higher education institutions is the broad authority it was granted when BCCC became a State institution. BCCC’s board is an independent body that answers to no one but the Governor who—with a much larger, wealthier and more influential higher education system to run—traditionally pays little attention to activities at BCCC. Though the college must comply with the policies and demands of the Maryland Higher Education Commission, this commission has little oversight authority. In short, it is the president who runs the college day in and day out, but it is clear from the early 1990s legislation reorganizing BCCC that the Board of Trustees is ultimately in charge of the institution and vested with the broadest oversight powers.

Among these powers, according to the Annotated Code of Maryland, are: the license to “establish entrance requirements for the College; approve courses and programs; adopt and change curricula; establish and change requirements for the awarding of credits and degrees and for graduation; . . . develop effective relationships and cooperative programs with the Baltimore City Public School System to assure that high school students are encouraged to enroll in the College; [and] fix the salaries and terms of employment of the President, faculty, and officers of the College.” The Board is directed to meet regularly “at such times and places as [the Board] determines;” it may also adopt its own “rules for the conduct of its meetings and the transaction of business.”

Despite these sweeping powers, however, as well as BCCC’s potential to be a critical contributor to the economic health of Baltimore City, the Board of Trustees in recent years has failed to act as the authority and activist it could and should be. It has not provided leadership in key areas or at critical times; nor has it demanded, through accountability, as much of BCCC’s administration. It tends to dwell on isolated minutiae versus big-picture matters and critical oversight, yet occasionally and inconsistently, it usurps the President’s authority. A recent example: in December 2003 it overruled several of the administration’s most critical personnel actions.³⁶

Turnover, Gaps in Leadership

During the last two years, BCCC has undergone significant changes in leadership that have simultaneously fueled and challenged its ability to implement change. The high turnover in nearly all key leadership positions, not surprisingly, has led to instability, large and widespread learning curves, repetition of efforts, and delays.

In summer 2002 the college’s president retired after 12 years, a long time at the helm of a community college. Following such a long tenure under one leader, a period of adjustment under the president’s successor was inevitable. The significant external pressure on BCCC to reform added to the challenge. There have also been major changes in the second administrative tier at BCCC, intensifying the impact of change at the top—particularly in the academic realm. Between 1990 and 2003, the college saw nine academic vice presidents come and go, many of them rotating interim VPs. (The academic VP is typically the second-ranking administrative post at BCCC and, arguably its most important second-tier slot.) President McKay noted in November 2003 that “there has not been strong and consistent academic leadership at the college for more than 10 years.”³⁷

In March 2002, BCCC hired a new permanent academic Vice President, Dr. Jerome Atkins, who visibly and vocally took charge of the academic division, sparking a sense among many people on campus that this time, things might be different and better. Among the first things Dr. Atkins did were to form an ad hoc committee to reform developmental education and rally a faculty jaded and cynical by a decade of unsuccessful reform efforts. He succeeded, and for several months energy and enthusiasm ran high. But in May 2003 Dr. Atkins abruptly left BCCC, leaving behind a year’s worth of work that was inconclusive, and a once-again disillusioned academic team.³⁸ In June 2003 an interim academic vice president was hired to serve for up to eight months until a permanent placement was found. This interim vice president was fired by the Board of Trustees six months later in December 2003 and the Dean of Arts and Sciences was appointed acting Vice President.

In Fall 2003, a month into the new academic year, three of the four remaining vice presidents were fired, suddenly and without explanation, spurring uncertainty and anxiety throughout the college, and resulting in a makeshift leadership team and some key leadership holes.³⁹ The interim academic VP, for example, was dispatched to also head the Business and Continuing Education Center downtown, putting the two divisions that deliver instruction to students—BCCC’s primary product and reason for being—under part-time supervision. The firings also led to the sudden resignation of the chair of BCCC’s Board of Trustees, spurring the Board’s third chair appointment in the last two years.

Finally, in December 2003, the Board fired BCCC’s interim academic VP, in place since June, and appointed an acting VP who, as of April 2004, was still serving in that capacity while the search for a permanent candidate was being conducted.

Institutionalized Faculty Resistance

Tension between faculty and administrators has a long history at BCCC; such tension is often a defining characteristic of an academic institution’s internal relations. When BCCC was still a City institution, faculty were unionized and their relationship with the administration was fairly acrimonious as a result. When BCCC became a state-run agency in the 1990s, however, union representation was eliminated as a condition of the takeover. This change did not close the rift. Faculty lost union benefits, and when an instructor was terminated shortly thereafter, the members filed a federal class action suit. Though BCCC ultimately prevailed in the lawsuit, it was censured in 1992 by the American Association of University Professors—a censure that remains in place today.⁴⁰

The ill will stemming from the lawsuit was intensified by difficult economic times. Maryland was in a recession and its financial promises to BCCC—which relies on the State for two-thirds of its operating budget—never materialized, resulting in a net increase in the college’s budget of only about \$100,000 during its first seven years. After years of the City’s inability to fund BCCC, State control led to the same problem. This, in turn, led to a disgruntled and much more vocal faculty. When Dr. James Tschechtelin assumed BCCC’s helm following the State takeover, the college had no policies or internal administrative procedures. Its very infrastructure had to be built on his watch. To accomplish this, he extended some authority to the academic side leading to faculty inclusion in some major college decisions and programs at critical times.

Against this backdrop of economic woes, unstable leadership within the academic division and a louder, more forceful faculty voice, some observers contend that a certain arrogance among BCCC faculty members met the new president when he arrived in 2002. In its May 2003 evaluation of the college, the Middle States Commission credited BCCC’s faculty with being “well-qualified and deeply committed to the institution” overall, but asserted that the Faculty Senate, its governing body, “has been preoccupied by issues of employment conditions while paying little attention to academic issues.”⁴¹

For their part, faculty members assert that they are taken for granted by certain leaders in the administration. Former acting academic vice president Dr. Elizabeth Johns has seconded their view, describing “a line of demarcation between faculty and the administration . . . built on miscommunication.” Despite the presence of quality instructors, Johns said, certain administrators have not provided the “support and motivation and an understanding that their work is valuable.”

It is clear that within the administration a rift between BCCC's faculty and President McKay was widening during much of 2003, breaking publicly in the fall. Several newspaper articles and an atmosphere of intimidation emanating from all sides consumed many BCCC employees' attention during the Fall 2003 semester. Even if relations between the faculty and president had begun improving by year's end, as some believe, the institution remains a place where—to quote one former ranking college official—the leadership and employees alike “thrive on chaos and confusion and politics and drama.”

Strategic Planning That Is Neither Strategic Nor Planned

BCCC engages in a strategic planning process that requires the administration to report regularly to the Board of Trustees on the status of its strategic benchmarks, and requires the Board of Trustees to submit a new, updated strategic plan along with its budget request each year to the Maryland Department of Budget and Management. This process is meant to create a meaningful level of accountability for BCCC, its president, and its Board. But in recent years strategic planning has become a mere formality in which status reports regularly get deferred at Board meetings, benchmarks simply go unmet, and plans submitted to the State are rolled over from one year to the next.

At the Board of Trustees' April 2003 meeting, two months before the close of fiscal 2003, the President's staff reported that the FY03 Strategic Priorities “had not experienced much change over time and 72 percent were carried over into FY04.”⁴² Meanwhile, the Board chair “expressed frustration that approximately 90 percent of the benchmarks under Strategic Priority 1 (The College must continue to improve student recruitment, retention and performance), were not met,” according to meeting minutes. Despite this concern, and despite assurances from the administration that a thorough planning process was underway, the FY04 plan all but mirrored the FY03 plan, and when it came time in August 2003 to submit the budget request to the State for FY05, it was sent without a strategic plan.⁴³

Another measure of the college's strategic planning process is the annual report it submits to the Maryland Higher Education Commission. According to MHEC's 2003 Performance Accountability Report for BCCC, the college has not only failed to meet key benchmarks for several years, but its performance on numerous counts has been in a state of sustained decline. According to the report:⁴⁴

- BCCC's benchmark four-year transfer/graduation rate of full-time students is 18 percent, but this figure has fallen steadily from 17 percent to 13 percent during the past four cohorts.

- BCCC’s benchmark six-year transfer/graduation rate of students is 22 percent, but this, too, has declined steadily from nearly 23 percent to 16 percent during the past three cohorts.
- BCCC’s benchmark four-year transfer/graduation rate of full-time minority students (the college’s majority) is 18 percent, but this has dropped from nearly 16 percent to 12 percent during the past four cohorts.
- BCCC’s benchmark transfer/graduation rate of all minority students is 22 percent, but this has dropped from 21 percent to less than 14 percent during the last three cohorts.
- BCCC’s benchmark expenditure on instruction is 50 percent, but instruction made up less than 42 percent of its total expenditure in FY 2001 and the college has not approached its goal in any of the last four fiscal years.

This prolonged failure to meet performance benchmarks suggests that the strategies BCCC is employing aren’t working, the priorities it has identified are not the correct priorities, and/or its strategic planning process does not support its true mission and primary role of ensuring the academic success of its students.

Finally, the strategic planning processes at BCCC aside, the absence of effective planning is evident in the way changes and reforms at the college currently unfold—without preparation, cohesion, clear direction, or outcomes assessment, all elements of accountability that a strategic planning process is intended to ensure.

Perceived Challenge: The State’s Budget Woes

BCCC’s reform efforts over the last two years have coincided with a State budget deficit that has dealt a hard blow to higher education. Due to funding cuts, most public colleges and universities have had to slash budgets and raise tuition, or operate under hostile and uncertain fiscal conditions.

BCCC has weathered the budget crisis better than most. It took a hit in State funding in FY’03 of roughly \$1 million which was absorbed by across-the-board cost reductions, chiefly in instruction.⁴⁵ Discussion of cuts for FY’04 have pervaded Board of Trustees meetings, yet this fiscal year began at the previous year’s funding level and by Spring 2004 the State reduction looked like \$1.8 million. This shortfall is to be absorbed by keeping positions vacant and cutting costs on contractual employees. (Because numerous developmental instructors and tutors are contractual employees, however, this could conceivably affect current efforts to reform BCCC’s developmental studies program.)

E. BCCC Moving Forward: Frameworks for Change

It was clear throughout 2002 and 2003 that some critical things needed to happen to move BCCC forward. These needed changes were identified in the various reports conducted during that time, some reflected recommendations dating back a decade or more. The Abell Foundation and others worked closely with BCCC to prioritize these reforms and create strategic frameworks for change, most of which BCCC embraced.

Abell Report Recommendations

For nearly two years following its 2002 report, the consultant revised initial Abell Foundation recommendations based on the consultant's ongoing research and that of BCCC. Given the many issues identified around developmental mathematics and placement testing, the consultant produced an in-depth report on both that was presented to administrators in May 2002.⁴⁶ The next report focused on the first-year experience of recent Baltimore City high school graduates at BCCC, shedding light on the inadequacy of the college's efforts to bridge the substantial high school-to-college gap, its student supports and services and its developmental program.⁴⁷ Both reports included specific recommendations.

At the request of BCCC in October 2002, the consultant took the first step in drafting strategic priorities to drive the reform process growing out of the various reports and research to date, as well as the Ad Hoc Committee on Reform of Developmental Education.⁴⁸ Presented to President McKay in November 2002, this draft not only comprised revisions to The Abell Foundation's previous sets of recommendations, but also recommended initiatives designed to capitalize on, complement and reflect activities at the college, and on the priorities of its new president.

These strategic priorities were guided by three broad goals:

- to help more students qualify for and access college-level courses;
- to help more students complete certificate and degree programs; and,
- to bolster accountability at the college to ensure that the latter two goals would indeed drive reform.

As did previous Abell Foundation recommendations, the strategic priorities identified developmental education as a critical area for change. Unlike previous recommendations, however, they were prescriptive and specific, categorized according to what could be accomplished immediately versus over the long term; necessary resource requirements; logistics; and overall feasibility. In December 2002, BCCC's president reviewed the strategic priorities and agreed with "more than 90 percent" of them.

These short-term priorities were agreed upon:

- Improve the academic preparation of incoming students by promoting BCCC, its academic programs and entrance requirements among prospective students early in their high school careers.
- Expand placement criteria beyond test scores for a truer picture of students' skills and needs.
- Eliminate MAT 82 (Intermediate Algebra) as a developmental course and college-level math prerequisite; ensure alignment between the placement test, developmental course curricula and end-of-course exams; evaluate, change and communicate math requirements for all college programs.
- Centralize and strengthen all tutoring services, which are scattered across campuses but are not dependable due to space constraints and untrained, unreliable tutoring staff.

These longer-term priorities were identified and agreed upon:

- Rewrite BCCC's mission to reflect the needs of its career students—a large majority—and create a viable three- to five-year strategic plan, complete with accountability measures.
- Create new career pathways out of existing tech prep programs in city schools and seek additional career articulation programs as new high schools are created; consider creation of a middle/early college high school within BCPSS' Innovative High School process; accept passing scores on the new Maryland High School Assessments in Algebra/Data Analysis, Geometry, and English as entry criteria for college-level courses.
- Create a new and distinct division for first-time and developmental students, including all students needing academic help—a one-stop “student success” center for testing, placement and academic intervention.
- Provide alternative and flexible modes of developmental instruction, clear standards for developmental instructors, and appropriate supports and training in developmental instruction.
- Streamline student supports and services; restructure multi-layered counseling/advisement process; replace existing learning communities with a true case management system of targeted programs for specific student populations, e.g.,: those pursuing health-related careers.

BCCC repeatedly used The Abell Foundation’s recommendations publicly as a guide for change. The self-study it presented to the Middle States Commission in January 2003 stated that “many of the observations and recommendations merit attention,” and that BCCC “is addressing many of the issues raised [by] Abell.” The Commission responded in its own April 2003 evaluation that “formal consideration and decisions on the recommendations in the Abell report are urgently needed, particularly those dealing with structure and delivery of services.”

Middle States Evaluation and Recommendations

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education’s recommendation of re-accreditation for BCCC included numerous observations spanning the college’s strengths, opportunities, and shortcomings. The recommendations of the Middle States report “attempted to offer guidance on process and tactical strategy for addressing them as well as prioritizing them.”⁴⁹ Key observations that the accreditation team made, and said warranted change, include:⁵⁰

There appears to be a lack of coordinated purpose to the many administrative activities of the institution; what seems to be lacking is an appreciation for how each initiative, program, service or functional area relates to an overarching purpose.

Planning in the academic area is lacking focus. A review of the reports and data provided contains a great deal of information, but this information lacks analysis or continuous evaluation and does not seem to have been used for decision-making . . .

There seems to be a general concern from all constituencies regarding lack of timely information and clear and effective communication.

Assessment standards and procedures for evaluating student learning are missing. Faculty needs to know the expectations and outcomes desired . . . The president must embark on an aggressive plan to bolster data-driven decision-making with respect to assessing institutional effectiveness and student-learning outcomes.

Some services may be duplicative . . . Both students and faculty have stated that the advisement model at BCCC is unnecessarily bifurcated and frustrating to students . . . There is no outcomes assessment plan [for] the success of [student services].

BCCC seems mired in contemplation. What is lacking is an aggressive, directive plan with assessment processes, [or] “benchmarks or yardsticks for measuring success.”

In light of these comments, the Middle States recommendations built on the following themes. BCCC should:

- revise its mission and ensure that all decisions and actions flow from it;
- replace contemplation of change with “action and implementation;”
- engage in strategic planning with an emphasis on academic master planning; BCCC must conduct outcomes assessment that is student-centered and drives the strategic planning process;
- become more “student-centered;” and
- improve communication and inclusion across all functions and areas of the college.

In addition to these observations and recommendations, certain stipulations accompanied the Middle States re-accreditation. Among them was the requirement that BCCC submit by December 15, 2003 a “revised ‘comprehensive’ mission statement for the institution and the outline of a process for implementing a collegially-based, strategic planning process for addressing both the recommendations of the self-study and the recommendations of the [Middle States evaluation] team.” Since the Middle States report’s release, BCCC’s leadership has cited it several times as a guide for reform and said it is following the report’s recommendations closely.

Fisher Report

In Spring 2003, BCCC’s Board of Trustees commissioned a “mini institutional review” by James L. Fisher. The resulting report was formulaic and reflected closely the content and format of Fisher’s institutional reviews for four-year institutions, but it contained these assertions about BCCC:⁵¹

- Numerous issues pertaining to faculty—hiring, qualifications, pay scales and rates, part-time vs. full-time status, and evaluations—need to be reviewed and overhauled.
- The college needs to place more importance on developmental education—“There is no other area . . . where improved performance would have so great an impact on the college and its students”—and make improvements that are based on best-practices and well-funded.
- BCCC needs to revisit its mathematics requirements because of the barriers they create to student progress.

III. BCCC's Response to Calls for Change



BCCC has responded to these calls for change by announcing and launching several programs and initiatives in the last two years. A little over a year into his leadership of this reform effort, President McKay confirmed the need for dramatic changes on a wide scale. In a statement to the entire college community in November 2003, he said:

“There is a crisis at BCCC. The crisis is not new. There are long-standing issues of governance; academic leadership; roles of program coordinators, department chairs, and deans; academic quality; student retention; and student success that need to be addressed. The status quo is not working for the majority of our students.”⁵²

Below are the major changes BCCC has begun since early 2002.

A. Ad Hoc Committee and Process

In March 2002, The Abell Foundation released the report, Baltimore City Community College at the Crossroads. Based on the findings that students were arriving at BCCC academically ill-prepared, and not succeeding once they were enrolled, the report recommended that BCCC re-examine math prerequisites for all its programs; curricula, pedagogy, and training for developmental education; criteria and preparation for course placement; and its partnership with Baltimore’s public schools.

In the wake of the report, BCCC began a process to overhaul its developmental studies program. Under Dr. Jerome Atkins, then-VP of Academic Affairs, the Ad Hoc Committee on Reform of Developmental Education was formed in April 2002. Its charge, as presented by Dr. Atkins to BCCC’s Board of Trustees in early 2002 and throughout the year to outside interest groups, was “to conduct a comprehensive review of the Abell report (and developmental education organization and delivery in general), develop recommendations for corrective action, and produce implementation plans complete with funding profiles and action timelines.”⁵³

The committee comprised about 40 members and was to have a 10-member steering committee and seven working subcommittees, each assigned a subject area to research in response to the issues raised in the Abell report. The committee’s focus was developmental education, but its scope was broader and took in scrutiny of BCCC’s credit programs, academic calendar, overall organizational structure of divisions and departments, and mission. The following areas were assigned to the subcommittees to research:

- Mission and organizational structure
- Curriculum, placement and delivery
- Learning services and student support
- Faculty evaluation, support and development
- Outcomes assessment and program evaluation

-
- Liaison with the Baltimore City Public School System
 - Best practices

The subcommittees' charge was to generate proposals for affordable and practical reform programs in these areas to be piloted during the 2002-03 academic year.

B. Academic Systems

The one pilot implemented during the 2002-03 academic year was not a byproduct of the Ad Hoc Committee, but of Dr. Atkins' own initiative. He was familiar with instructional software produced by Academic Systems Corporation (a subsidiary of PLATO Learning) to deliver developmental instruction; at BCCC, he learned more from faculty who had observed it at other community colleges.

Academic Systems claims that its software is used by approximately 350 post-secondary institutions across the country, and has had particular success with underprepared students at community colleges. According to the company's own promotional literature as well as colleges using Academic Systems products, the software increases achievement using multi-media instruction via the Internet that creates and supports "a faculty-guided, learner-centered approach in instruction and learning." Instructors tap a range of techniques—direct instruction, collaborative projects, continuous assessments, and computer-assisted instruction—to create individualized learning plans so students can work in different ways at different rates. Online delivery of instructions allows instructors to monitor students' work closely and provide them with detailed and regular feedback on their progress.

Dr. Atkins believed that broader use of technology could lead to higher levels of student success in developmental studies at BCCC. He also believed Academic Systems software in particular could address the issues raised in the Abell report: namely, BCCC's low developmental pass rates, its math standards which did not provide for a smooth transition from required high school math, and an assessment and placement process that did not meet students' real needs. With multiple opportunities to pass a course through testing on the online curriculum, Dr. Atkins reasoned that students could also, in theory, move through the developmental course sequence more quickly.

BCCC decided to pilot the Academic Systems products—an online math curriculum, an online English curriculum, and an online support and tutorial program—in Summer 2002. The ambitious plan called for rolling out Academic Systems on a large scale over the course of one to two years. The program was to be used the first summer with a cohort of scholarship recipients straight out of high school (the college's Granville T. Woods scholars), with the intent of improving their math and English skills so they could place into college-level courses that fall. In Fall 2002 the software would be piloted among a select group of BCCC's developmental math and English

students, and in Spring 2003 its use would be expanded among high school students in the Baltimore City Public School System. By July 2003, a “full-scale implementation” would be underway “involving students, faculty and facilitators at BCCC and all BCPSS high schools,” per Dr. Atkins’ proposals. The Abell Foundation committed \$28,000 to help fund the pilot.

C. New Developmental Studies Division

One of the March 2002 Abell report’s recommendations was that BCCC create a separate division for developmental studies. A separate division, the report asserted, would allow BCCC to upgrade the quality of developmental instruction through better coordination of course offerings and support functions, targeted professional development, closer controls, and clear-cut outcomes assessment. The notion of a separate developmental division at BCCC dated back to the late 1990s when a handful of faculty and administrators researched and lobbied for such a change, but nothing ever materialized. The idea also surfaced during Ad Hoc Committee discussions, though an actual proposal was never generated.

As of February 2003, BCCC’s administration had resolved to overhaul its developmental program. It recommended a separate department within the Division of Arts and Sciences, headed by a director of developmental studies who would be hired from outside the college. (The administration opted for a department, asserting that it could not afford to add a dean’s position to head a separate division.) Plans for the developmental studies department relied on computer-based instruction and a team of faculty trained by experts in developmental instruction. Finally, the recommendation called for developmental instruction to take place off-campus in community-based centers with extended hours and a developmental lab on the Liberty campus.

Most of these features are components of developmental studies models at community colleges nationwide. The community-based instruction component made BCCC’s vision unique, if unproven. Because it would require acquisition of property and the buildings, it was not a solution to BCCC’s challenges in the near term. As a result, the administration decided to start by simply creating a new developmental department with new instructors and revamped, outcomes-based syllabi to be operating by Fall 2003. In May, it shared this proposal with the college community, and requested that the consultant be dispatched to work full-time through December on this effort.

D. Other Academic Division Changes

During Summer 2003 the administration made three significant changes in BCCC’s Academic Affairs division, intending both to improve student success rates and to change some of the entrenched ways the college’s academic team had traditionally

operated, namely its independence from the administration.

Turnover in Department Chairs

To overhaul academic leadership at the department and program level, most department chairs and program coordinators were removed and/or replaced during Summer 2003. As a result, six of the college’s 11 departments (including the two new developmental departments) now had new chairs, and two departments remained without a chair.⁵⁴ An interim chair was assigned to one of these later in March 2004.⁵⁵

The turnover came on the heels of comments by President McKay to the Board of Trustees about a pattern of poor faculty performance and behavior, and the lack of consequences for these within the academic divisions.⁵⁶ Specifically, he complained that:

- faculty were teaching two courses in the same room at the same time and getting paid twice; faculty were refusing to change grades of students who complained and department chairs who supported them in this;
- students were complaining of rude faculty members and a pattern of poor faculty behavior, albeit undocumented, over time;
- unclear roles and lines of authority existed among faculty, chairs and deans; and the system for faculty credentialing was uneven and poorly monitored.
- President McKay said supervisors and chairs responsible for evaluating faculty performance needed to be more accountable, and told the Board he intended to build a new academic leadership team.

Raising Faculty Standards

Effective Fall 2003, all instructors at BCCC must have master’s degrees in their fields of study.⁵⁷ The new qualification, set by the administration, immediately disqualified existing instructors in the area of developmental math, some of whom had bachelor’s degrees in math and/or graduate-level degrees in the sciences and related areas, but no graduate degree in mathematics. BCCC officials contend the new qualifications match standards elsewhere and are part of a broader strategy to “address Abell’s recommendations” and “allow students to move through developmental classes faster,” President McKay told the Baltimore Sun in August 2003. (Nowhere did the Abell report recommend that BCCC faculty possess a master’s degree.)

Reducing the Number of Developmental Courses

In July 2003, BCCC decided to merge its three developmental reading courses with its three developmental English courses. Because two-thirds of incoming students require remediation in reading, English and math, this would, in effect, reduce the number of developmental requirements for most students by one-third. According to internal correspondence, the rationale behind the merger was as follows:

“Through the use of the Academic Systems software, all of the components of reading are already included in the English programs . . . What this means to students is that the three levels of developmental reading courses will no longer be required separate from the three levels of the developmental English courses. Not only should this new instructional process move students successfully through their remedial programs more smoothly and transition them more quickly into credit coursework, it will also have the beneficial effect of reducing the amount of tuition costs that students must direct towards developmental coursework—allowing for students to have more of their educational finances available for credit coursework.”⁵⁸

E. An Academic Master Plan

Responding to a Middle States recommendation, BCCC’s administration told the Board of Trustees at its May 2003 retreat that it would create an “academic master plan”—something BCCC has never had and which, the president’s staff asserted, would drive its vision, mission and strategic planning, starting in the 2004-05 academic year.⁵⁹

According to a presentation by the administration at a faculty planning day in late May 2003, the college’s academic master plan would be based on the belief that “an academic vision is a precondition to other collegewide planning processes,” including strategic planning, enrollment management, facilities master planning, and marketing planning.⁶⁰ The plan was to “provide a clear academic vision” and “policy guidance on the college’s academic future” and be developed by the Division of Academic Affairs (renamed Division of Learning in June 2003) “in cooperation with the Board, the President, Faculty and other stakeholders.”

The plan, the presentation asserted, would allow the college community to determine at any given time: where BCCC will be in five years; which programs will be smaller or closed; which programs need to grow; how the BCCC environment will need to change; how the student body will change; how the faculty body will change; and what resources will be required for all of the above. Furthermore, the handout stated, BCCC’s Academic Master Plan would become critical to the college’s overall processes for accountability and program and outcomes assessment.

The administration presented the idea of the academic master plan to the campus

community in late May, but it said it would not get underway until faculty returned in Fall 2003. Middle States, meanwhile, stipulated as part of its re-accreditation that the college submit by June 2005 a report illustrating the implementation of, among other things, a “clearly defined Academic Master Plan that specifically addresses the issue of remediation and the areas of academic program development as well as program review.”⁶¹ At the October 2003 Board of Trustees meeting, the administration declared it would have a draft to the Board by December. In late January, the administration’s academic master plan draft was presented to the BCCC community.

F. Improving Advising and Other Student Services

At the May 2003 Board retreat, and in response to outside recommendations, the administration presented a plan to overhaul academic advising at BCCC. An Ad Hoc Committee on Academic Advising was formed in February 2003 with the charge to “review multiple options and models for the advising process to determine the most effective advising process for students and develop appropriate outcome assessment measures.”⁶² The administration also vowed to “revamp and improve” other student services through pre-admissions advising, early college awareness, and a renewed program to move students through the developmental course sequences while still in high school (PASS).

In place since 1999, the PASS program is a collaboration with the Baltimore City Public School System that identifies and offers English and math remedial courses to high school students not on pace to graduate with the necessary skills for college. Selected students take BCCC’s placement test, and BCCC provides the remedial instruction at their schools. The program was disappointing; high school participation was inconsistent and declined over time, and schools that stayed with the program produced little in the way of favorable results. As a result, BCCC replaced it in Summer 2003 with a more ambitious plan for students’ remediation before their arrival at BCCC. With the promise of numerous community partners, ancillary resources and new supports for participating students (intensive five-day-a-week classes, counseling, clubs, summer camps, graduation ceremonies, etc.), the program was called the Early College Institute and BCCC drafted a proposal to overhaul what for four years had been known as PASS.

The new program was slated to begin in Baltimore City middle schools in Spring 2004, and to be implemented later in high schools. The high school component will use Academic Systems’ developmental software; because BCPSS lacks funding and middle schools are poorly equipped technologically, the middle school portion of the program will be taught traditionally using textbooks.

G. Addressing Maryland’s Health Care Workforce Shortage

Because BCCC’s health programs are its strongest, and because the college is poised to respond to Baltimore’s health care industry’s severe workforce shortage, BCCC’s administration has worked to identify how it can become a player in the health care arena.

In October 2002, President McKay briefed the Board of Trustees on a plan to query local health care industry officials— hospitals, long-term care facilities, HMOs, private medical centers, etc.— about programs they’d like to see expanded or started at BCCC. During late 2002 and early 2003, he hosted three forums to bring these institutions’ representatives together to discuss workforce challenges the industry faces, and to identify opportunities to collaborate on solutions.⁶³ In February 2003, President McKay told the Baltimore Business Journal that BCCC would craft its plan for addressing health care workforce shortages by June. “The idea is not to just start programs without cause, but to find out what [employers’] needs are and design new programs accordingly,” he said.⁶⁴

After the forums, BCCC led the launch of the Health Occupations Workforce Initiative and compiled a report on the challenges facing Maryland’s health care industry, existing initiatives underway to address them, and BCCC’s current and future roles in the area. The administration’s goal was to release the report by year’s end and kick-off the initiative in 2004 with a first wave of programs responsive to needs identified in the report.

This past winter, President McKay met with officials from The Johns Hopkins Hospital to discuss a partnership between the two institutions whereby BCCC would provide training in occupational areas where the hospital has shortages.

IV. Reforms Impeded by Poor Implementation



During Fall 2003, BCCC placed advertisements in the *Baltimore Sun* touting changes it has made, including:⁶⁵

- Enhancing academic programs
- Reforming math and science counseling to better address the needs of student development
- Increasing the number of qualified full-time faculty to ensure student success
- Upgrading technology and classrooms to meet the needs of the entire campus

Despite these claims, and BCCC's numerous efforts to respond to demands for change, the initiatives launched by the college since early 2002 have been plagued by ineffective implementation, and have not counted in any meaningful way towards "ensuring student success." The most salient and recurring problems with BCCC's reform efforts are:

- Absence of a strategic, comprehensive plan to guide the various reforms
- No visible, tangible reform leadership
- A dearth of best practices- and data-based decisions driving reforms
- Insufficient planning or groundwork preceding reforms
- The absence of a close working relationship with Baltimore City's public school system, BCCC's primary pipeline of prospective students, to ensure success within both institutions and a smooth transition between the two
- Among numerous disparate initiatives, few are seen through to completion
- Insufficient internal support for reforms
- A pervasive lack of accountability at all levels of implementation and oversight
- Consistent failure of the administration to achieve widespread buy-in for decisions and actions, from the Board of Trustees down to the lowest organizational levels

Together, these factors have impeded BCCC's most significant reform initiatives and limited their potential to increase student success rates.

In many cases, meanwhile, BCCC's claims regarding implemented reforms are inconsistent with public statements and actual plans. Accountability reports feature missed deadlines and responsible parties who no longer work at the college. Perhaps most significantly, BCCC's three major reform initiatives during the last two years (the Developmental Reform Committee, new developmental curricula and a new Developmental Division) have given little indication to date that meaningful reform is taking place.

A. The Ad Hoc Committee: A Year “On Hold”

Throughout 2002 and into 2003, the Ad Hoc Committee on Reform of Developmental Education was—outwardly, at least—BCCC’s most visible strategy for enacting reforms. It was cited by the college as its formal response to the Abell report and, more generally, as its prescription for change. It was held up as a strategic blueprint to various area interest groups and potential partners, and it was hailed by the college during its 10-year accreditation process as a force likely to “have an impact on the course of developmental education at BCCC.”⁶⁶

But while it started out with widespread enthusiasm among BCCC faculty and staff, the Ad Hoc Committee for developmental reform fell apart within less than a year.

Each of the Committee’s seven subcommittees was asked to generate a proposal to be piloted in Fall 2003, specifically keeping in mind opportunities created by instructional technology. Subcommittee research spurred reviews of everything from BCCC’s mission to its placement process, generating months of debate and a few proposals, but only one proposal was adopted. Prepared and submitted by Dr. Atkins himself, this proposal grew out of his belief that using personal computers and the Internet in the classroom would be critical to the reform of developmental education at BCCC.

The steering committee that was to lead the Ad Hoc Committee never materialized. Monthly meetings repeated the same agenda and rarely amounted to more than a review of The Abell Foundation recommendations and the process by which BCCC would respond. Meetings were spent parsing the language of the recommendations and reviewing protocol for submitting proposals, down to detail such as how to present a budget matrix. A few subcommittees met regularly, generated proposals and responded seriously to the charge; most corresponded, met and produced little overall.

In September 2002, the full Ad Hoc Committee made a presentation to the college community and its new president, with each subcommittee reporting on its work and reform proposals to date. Of the six to eight proposals submitted for review, some received feedback and underwent revisions, but not one received final or formal consideration, and not one was chosen for implementation. Meanwhile, the subcommittees ceased to meet throughout Fall 2002, and by winter eight to 10 people were attending committee-wide meetings that had previously drawn 40 or more participants. By early 2003 the Ad Hoc committee ceased to exist. Without any explanation, it simply stopped meeting.

At some point, and perhaps in differing moments during this time, members of the board began to sense that BCCC had not been responding to the March 2002 Abell Foundation recommendations in any timely way. These issues appeared on board meeting agendas in early 2003, but were repeatedly postponed at the last minute.

When Dr. Atkins made his initial presentation in April 2003, the board noted that time was limited, stated that the topic needed “more thorough discussion” and suggested it be added to the May retreat agenda.⁶⁷ Dr. Atkins left the college in the days before the retreat, where again the work of the Ad Hoc Committee got only passing attention.

Ad Hoc Committee oversight and accountability prior to this point is unclear, despite the huge import BCCC claimed for it publicly as its means for reform. The Ad Hoc Committee was prominently featured throughout the “self-study” that BCCC’s Board of Trustees presented to the Middle States team in January 2003, and many of the study’s recommendations specifically addressed the work of this body.⁶⁸ Clearly, no one communicated to Middle States during its April/May 2003 evaluation that the work of the Ad Hoc Committee had been abandoned.

B. Academic Systems: A Pilot Program Without a Navigator

The highest-profile (and perhaps the costliest) reform BCCC implemented in its overhaul of developmental studies has been the adoption of Academic Systems software for online delivery of all developmental instruction. According to college purchase orders, BCCC contracted with Academic Systems for \$699,060 in software, online course materials and textbooks during Summer 2003 and Fall 2003 alone, including \$24,000 worth of faculty training on the Academic Systems products.

Piloting Academic Systems made sense; one of the March 2002 Abell Report’s recommendations cited the need for alternative and flexible modes of developmental instruction—an assertion supported by best-practices research, as well as BCCC’s own experimentation at the time with self-paced courses and developmental courses online. Meanwhile, data from community colleges using Academic Systems suggested that the software was in fact successful in boosting developmental pass rates among at-risk students nationwide. In November 2002 a BCCC study team visited Cuyahoga Community College in Cleveland, Ohio to observe first-hand just how such gains were achieved.

But such experiences and data were never analyzed in devising an implementation model that suited BCCC’s specific needs. Moreover, although BCCC ran three phases of an Academic Systems pilot, it never conducted a thorough pilot evaluation to pinpoint what it should and shouldn’t do differently to ensure successful full-scale implementation—which was slated to occur in July 2003, if the pilot phases went well. Because all three pilot phases were riddled with problems, a thorough evaluation was an essential prerequisite to fine tune the program for successful use at BCCC.

The Pilot As It Unfolded

Phase I, Summer Semester 2002

From its inception, BCCC's Academic Systems pilot was problematic. Details were still being hashed out in July 2002, halfway through the first pilot phase, and participating students did not get access to the software until quite late in the eight-week summer session, as late as the fifth or sixth week. This set the precedent for a year-long project plagued by setbacks and delays.

Phase II, Fall Semester 2002

BCCC's goals and implementation plans, by the standards of the educational community, suffered from a lack of specificity. The Academic Systems account executive for BCCC stepped in and wrote the formal project proposal for BCCC, complete with funding requests, in October 2002—two months into the pilot's second phase. Given this delay, pilot implementation for Fall 2002 followed no real plan. English was included at the last minute, causing a late start after students had already purchased traditional English course materials; uncertainty among students about course requirements; and numerous incomplete assignments on their behalf. Not surprisingly, student results reflected the confusion. Of the 63 ENG 81 students who used Academic Systems software, just 44 percent passed.⁶⁹ The goal for the pilot was to match or surpass the existing pass rate for the course of 54 percent.⁷⁰ (Data were not collected for participating math students.)

Phase III, Spring Semester 2003

The third phase of the pilot, in Spring 2003, suffered from similar setbacks, despite intensive last-minute planning efforts—particularly by Academic Systems—throughout January 2003. Participating BCCC students did not receive access to tutorial software, textbooks and headphones until well into the semester. By the third week only 15 percent of the 152 participating English students appeared to have and to be using the software.⁷¹ English instructors didn't follow a single protocol for monitoring student work and grading papers, further confusing the evaluation of student progress.

Coordinators were appointed for the math and English programs and charged with submitting weekly student performance data to the Dean of Arts and Sciences. They collected student performance data for the Spring 2003 semester. The overall pass rate for MAT 81 participants was 44 percent, a number that surpassed the baseline of 27 percent but was based on only 66 of 148 enrollees completing all course assignments and taking a final exam.⁷² For English, the overall pass rate for ENG 81 and ENG 82 was 66 percent, well beyond the targeted baseline rate of 54 percent.⁷³ Despite these encouraging pass rates, the execution of the Spring 2003 pilot phase was so incomplete as to render the data invalid. To quote one BCCC English instructor who participated in the pilot: "It's just a miracle that we had eight sections go on and we had a

pass rate of about 67 percent. It was all so chaotic and there was no support.”

No Evaluation

When Phase III of the pilot started, there was no plan for evaluating its outcomes, despite the fact that BCCC had hired an outside evaluator, and that Phase III was the “actual pilot phase” of the program, to be followed by full-scale implementation. Despite the efforts of the math and English coordinators to track the pilot during the Spring 2003 semester, no one managed the pilot evaluation process. The only thing to emerge from the evaluator was a developmental student survey seeking basic demographic data and information about students’ comfort level with computers, something BCCC already collects via a questionnaire that all incoming students must complete prior to taking the Accuplacer placement test.

The Lost Opportunity with BCPSS

Perhaps most representative of the poor implementation that plagued this pilot were the lapses in communication, the last-minute planning, the insufficient technological support, and the outstanding questions about funding and protocol that forced the Spring 2003 program with participating Baltimore City high school students to fall through—on the first day of Spring 2003 classes.

In October 2002, the e-Learning Manager of Classroom Support Systems for BCPSS’ Information Technology Department raised a red flag about BCCC’s implementation strategy, namely its stated need to obtain pilot results in six months, ostensibly to meet its July 2003 deadline for full-scale implementation. “A program of this type that has a strong possibility of improving the quality of education for students needs more up-front analysis, design and testing to assure a smooth implementation,” the official stated. “I would like to be able to do it right the first time.”⁷⁴

Despite his concerns and a request by the school system to slow down implementation, this official’s words proved prophetic. BCPSS’ Chief Technology Officer, who was instrumental in halting the project in January 2003, described the pilot as “another half-baked instructional intervention.” He asserted that “any new initiatives in this area should be well thought out with real curricular goals, well designed evaluations, well thought through implementation, training and technical support plans, none of which are currently in evidence on this initiative.”⁷⁵

Little Leadership, Little Follow-through

Throughout 2002 and well into 2003 this pilot was given priority status by BCCC’s Academic VP, Dr. Jerome Atkins, who launched the project. But like other BCCC reform endeavors, it lacked a system to ensure proper implementation.

BCCC did not follow its own implementation plan. Perhaps most critically, it did not implement certain steps Academic Systems asserted were key to the pilot’s success:

A marketing effort never got off the ground; an evaluation plan was never executed; and a program coordinator was never hired. The last lapse was perhaps the most significant, for having somebody in charge would have ensured accountability and follow-through on the various other components. In the face of this leadership void, it was typically the Academic Systems account executive who stepped in and assumed basic tasks of scheduling, communication and coordination.

During January 2003, the implementation team worked hard to avoid the oversight lapses of the Fall 2002 semester and ensure a smooth pilot phase during Spring 2003. Yet by month's end it still remained unclear who at BCCC was responsible for the day-to-day details of the project and who was responsible for delivering the results. Not only had Academic Systems urged hiring such a person, but The Abell Foundation had consistently suggested that there be a "strong detailed-oriented point person who believes in Academic Systems to direct [the] project" and had earmarked funding for such an individual.⁷⁶

Data collection efforts aside, no one managed the pilot evaluation process. Students were not properly advised about the self-paced and computerized nature of the Academic Systems courses. Many reported they didn't know they had signed up for a computerized class and preferred traditional lecture-style instruction. Meanwhile, there was no BCCC leadership for the piece of the pilot that would use Academic Systems in City schools starting in Fall 2003.

Finally, at no point did the necessary support for BCCC's Academic Systems pilot come from the top—despite the fact that computerized instruction is, as the current administration states, a priority for BCCC, and despite the administration's support for Academic Systems.

Goals Go Unmet, Yet Full-Scale Implementation Moves Forward

The goals of the pilot went largely unmet. Pass rates of participating students did exceed those of students in traditional developmental math and English courses in the Spring 2003 semester. In ENG 81, for example, pilot participants had an overall pass rate of 66 percent compared to 54 percent for students in traditional ENG 81 classes the previous year. However:

There are no data showing that retention improved. The existing retention rate of 60 percent was used as a baseline, yet in the case of the MAT 81 pilot, only 66 of 148 students (45 percent) completed the course and took the final in Spring 2003. There are no parallel data for participating English students.

Because the BCPSS piece of the pilot fell through, the exemption rate from developmental math courses of BCPSS 12th-graders never improved.

And despite a few isolated incidences of students completing a course and moving to the next course in a single semester, no data indicate that participating students moved through developmental course sequences more quickly as a result of the pilot.

Despite this lack of clear student progress, the absence of any evaluation and the pilot's many glitches, BCCC in May 2003 adopted Academic Systems for all developmental instruction starting in Fall 2003, allowing the college to keep pace with its original implementation plan.

C. New Developmental Division: A Rushed Start

“There is no other area of the college where improved performance would have so great an impact on the college and its students[as in developmental instruction]. The college needs to ascertain what educational approaches work best, learn which personnel are the most capable of producing the desired results, and then provide generous resource support for augmented efforts. This is, after all, the gate through which most BCCC students must walk and therefore the college needs to give its developmental education efforts more attention and a higher level of priority.”

*--Baltimore City Community College Review,
April-June 2003, James L. Fisher, Ltd.*

Of all the reform initiatives BCCC has planned and launched in the last two years, the launch of a new, separate developmental division has been by far the most sweeping, with the greatest potential to improve student success rates. Unfortunately, so incomplete was its launch that one administrator involved in its creation said the new division—absent critical leadership and student services—still had “not gone into effect” as of the Spring 2004 semester.

The New Division—on Paper

“Based upon best practices in the state and region, formulate the structure for a separate developmental studies division at the college.”

*--Objective 1.1, Draft Proposal for BCCC
Developmental Studies Division*

By June 2003, what had been planned as a developmental studies department within the Division of Arts and Sciences had become larger, more expensive, and more important: the Center for Learning Programs, a separate academic division, complete with its own developmental departments and dean.

According to a July 2003 draft proposal, the creation of the division would serve three of the college’s strategic priorities: to improve student recruitment, retention and performance (its highest strategic priority); to improve responsiveness to workforce needs through partnerships and collaborations with businesses, industries and educational institutions; and to improve responsiveness to community needs.⁷⁷ Flowing from each of these strategic priorities were goals, objectives and expected outcomes, near- and long-term. There was also a timeline for establishing the division, complete with deadlines and responsible parties for each step that its creation would entail.

According to the proposal, key components the new division would comprise were:

- A new dean, Dean of Learning Programs, to oversee the new division
- Two newly created departments comprising the division—one for developmental English and one for developmental math
- Use of Academic Systems software and instructional materials as the curriculum in all developmental courses
- A staff with specific experience/training in developmental education

Outcomes BCCC set out to achieve while implementing the division were:

- The development and implementation of a fully centralized division targeting curriculum planning and instruction for developmental studies courses as a separate division of the college—the Center for Learning Programs—to be ready for launch in Fall 2003.
- The establishment of criteria for, and the hiring of a Dean of Learning Programs, and requisite staffing for the new division by the start of the Fall 2003 semester.
- The establishment of hiring/appointment criteria for faculty and staff for the new division.
- The review of credentials, expertise and background of current full and part-time faculty and staff, based on hiring criteria for staffing of the separate division.
- The integration of BCCC’s existing academic supports and development of a “comprehensive, college-wide academic support and student services plan to provide the foundation for the success of the Center for Learning Programs.”

The July draft proposal also included broad parameters for performance outcomes for the division over time, ranging from increased student pass rates to articulation agreements with high schools targeting pre-college academic success initiatives. These, however, had no hard numbers or benchmarks attached to them.

The Actual Creation, Launch of the New Division

When a draft proposal emerged in July 2003, the pressure was on to create BCCC's new developmental division very quickly. During the latter half of the summer, a clearly overburdened administration resulted in missteps and missed deadlines, and prevented the proposal from fulfilling its intended role as a road map. The division was primed for a problem-ridden start.

No Outcomes

Following release of the draft proposal for the Center for Learning Programs, BCCC held discussions on outcomes assessment with The Abell Foundation in light of the absence of concrete outcomes in the proposal, and the fact that President McKay charged The Abell Foundation consultant with evaluating the launch of the new division. Over several weeks the consultant established a process for identifying expected outcomes for the new division in areas of student performance, faculty/instructional effectiveness, and student supports and services, and measuring the division's progress toward improving overall student success rates.

A baseline of student performance data was compiled to guide the administration in establishing broad benchmarks, to be used with a combination of qualitative and quantitative data to evaluate the division in its first semester. This evaluation, in turn, would be used to guide the setting of new benchmarks for the division's second semester, to ensure accountability at every step of the division's evolution and at every participant level. This baseline comprised, where possible, five years' worth of course completion and pass rate data (from 1998-99 through 2002-03), and other statistics (limited by inconsistent and irregular tracking over the years and across courses, departments and divisions) on placement testing, student attendance, students' use of supports and services, etc.⁷⁸ This baseline report was delivered to the administration in mid-September. No benchmarks for the first semester were ever set.

Student Feedback: A Key Accountability Measure That Never Materialized

At President McKay's request, The Abell Foundation consultant began to design a Fall 2003 student survey to collect more information about the population served by the developmental studies division. Perhaps more critically, the survey would evaluate the new division from a student perspective. According to the college, this was a priority among the consultant's responsibilities. Yet, there appears to be no evidence that crucial input from BCCC parties who would help administer and analyze the sur-

vey was not forthcoming, and by September 2003, the survey had been tabled, once it was clear it wouldn't be feasible in the division's first semester.

In December 2003 BCCC's administration released a matrix showing the recommendations of Abell reports of the last two years and the reforms it had implemented in response; who at BCCC was responsible for implementing them and by when; and the status of each recommendation. In this document the administration stated that it agreed with The Abell Foundation's recommendation "to place special emphasis on gathering and evaluating qualitative information about the experiences of incoming students for use in redesigning student support services and remedial education." It claimed, however, that it could not meet a December 2003 deadline for doing so due to insufficient staff.⁷⁹ Meanwhile, the Foundation had already conducted the first part of the task as part of its January 2003 report on first-year students at BCCC, and had to postpone part two in the fall after various BCCC parties failed to participate.⁸⁰

No Developmental Dean at Start

At the end of July 2003, the search committee for a new developmental dean began to meet. In mid-August it forwarded finalist recommendations to the President and academic VP, despite an August 1 deadline for having the new dean on board and an original expectation that the new dean would contribute to planning the division he or she would oversee. None of the finalist candidates was hired, however, and the new division was launched without a leader.

In the absence of a new dean, the Dean of Arts and Sciences oversaw both the summer planning of the new division and its fall launch. She did this in addition to her existing and very consuming job of overseeing the Arts and Sciences Division. She had significant help from the academic VP until the latter was dispatched half-time to head up BCCC's Business and Continuing Education Center during the Fall semester.

As the end of the Fall 2003 semester neared, the college hired a dean of developmental studies who was slated to start in January 2004.⁸¹ This hire was not the result of an inclusive search process as stipulated by the division proposal. Yet, the candidate had strong credentials and her impending arrival had generated the sense among some that the new division would at last get off the ground. (The dean-designate, Savannah Jones, had extensive teaching experience; had attended the Kellogg Institute, one of the nation's premier training grounds in developmental education; held a doctorate in educational administration; and had served as Vice President for Student Affairs at Philadelphia Community College.) But the appointment fell through at the December Board meeting, when Board members overruled her appointment.

No Faculty Training

In early 2003, BCCC's administration asserted that a predominantly new team of faculty trained by experts in developmental instruction would be a key feature of its new,

largely off-site developmental studies program. By Spring it had scaled back these plans, stating that there would at least be a new developmental unit with new instructors and revamped, outcomes-based syllabi in place by Fall 2003.

This new unit, plans for which by mid-summer had expanded to make it a separate academic division, was launched with most of the same full-time developmental faculty from previous years in place. Among the many new contractual hires, few had any formal training in developmental education, and while many indeed held a master's degree, as stipulated by the new faculty qualifications policy adopted by the administration in Spring 2003, not all had a master's degree in the field he/she was teaching—a requirement of the new credentialing policy. One full-time, contractual developmental math instructor, for example, had a master's degree not in mathematics, but environmental science. Meanwhile, the only training for developmental faculty was a cursory workshop in Academic Systems a week before classes began.

In its December 2003 status report on reforms, BCCC asserted it had completed The Abell Foundation's recommendations to "explore the feasibility of hiring full-time faculty with expertise in remedial instruction" and to "redouble its efforts to recruit qualified remedial instructors," both in Summer 2003. Given the haphazard, last-minute hiring for the new division that continued well into the Fall semester, these assertions ring hollow.

No Management Structure

The various facets of launching the new developmental division were overseen by, and went through, the academic VP and Dean of Arts and Sciences. At no point, however, was there an overarching plan or a core team of people driving and coordinating the many disparate efforts.

- A final proposal for the department—beyond the July 1 draft—never surfaced or circulated.
- People were pulled into projects and tasks as help was needed, so that few people at BCCC had comprehensive or specific knowledge about what the new division would entail, and how it would be launched prior to the start of the Fall 2003 semester.
- Most specifics of the draft proposal were not adhered to, initiatives and decisions never materialized, and timelines weren't met.

Last-Minute Implementation

Most planning for the new division took place a few weeks before the start of the Fall 2003 semester. As a result the launch was disorganized, and it was nearly six weeks into the semester before major problems were resolved.

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- Although developmental department chairs were identified in early summer, they were not officially appointed until late August. As a result, much of the hiring of instructors took place over Labor Day weekend and into the semester, causing students to lose class time because teachers did not receive course assignments.
 - Though the decision to merge developmental reading with developmental English occurred in late June, it was not widely announced until late August, after several hundred students had already registered for reading classes. This led to student confusion and a last-minute scramble among staff to re-register students and find alternate classes for them so they would not lose their full-time status, a requirement for federal financial aid. But in many cases these were classes for which students weren't even qualified; registration staff were putting students who had placed into ENG 80 and ENG 81, for example, into SP 101 (Fundamentals of Speech Communication, a three-credit college-level course), for which ENG 82 is a prerequisite.
 - A number of reading instructors complained they did not know how to teach English, and English instructors complained they could not teach reading.

A Troubled Academic Systems Roll-Out

Full-scale implementation of Academic Systems software for all developmental courses, the cornerstone of the new developmental division, took place without the necessary infrastructure to support it, resulting in a last-minute roll-out of the program and several lost weeks of learning.

Despite the decision in late spring to adopt Academic Systems for all developmental courses, key program decisions were—like many aspects of the division's implementation—left until late August and September:

- As of mid-August, there weren't enough classrooms equipped with computers to accommodate across-the-board use of Academic Systems, and this problem was not resolved until well into September. The scheduling problems which resulted left students sitting idle for the first few weeks of the semester, and forced instructors to rely on textbook supplements to the software and improvisation.
- Faculty were not trained in Academic Systems until the last week of August. Many faculty, particularly adjunct instructors, were unaware of the training dates because they were set in mid-August and communicated internally. Many of the last-minute hires received no training at all.
- There were problems accessing the software once it was installed. For example, many instructors and students had computers, but lacked the necessary pass codes to access the instructional software.

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- There were no written syllabi for developmental courses until the sixth week of classes so different instructors taught different material.

The first few weeks of Fall 2003 were punctuated by developmental classes that did not have instructors, developmental instructors who didn't have classrooms, developmental students who wandered halls looking for classrooms and instructors, developmental instructors completely unfamiliar with the Academic Systems model, different developmental instructors teaching different materials, and developmental students who missed classes due to the confusion.

No Substantive Changes in Student Supports and Services

Best practices in developmental education at community colleges across the country show consistently that a strong system of supports including academic advising, counseling, and tutoring is critical to a successful developmental program.

Recent evaluations of BCCC have therefore focused on student academic support and other services as an area warranting close scrutiny and change. One Abell report, in particular, *Set Up To Fail: The First-Year Student Experience at BCCC*, chronicled the difficult transition recent City high school graduates endure when enrolling at BCCC, shedding light on a system of student supports and services that is poorly marketed, barely used, and largely ineffective.⁸² Even BCCC's Board of Trustees noted the confusion and overlap apparent in the college's myriad supports and services in Spring 2003, and repeatedly requested a review that would aid reform.⁸³

Consistent with these findings, BCCC's plan, as of July 2003, was to have two full-time developmental counselors in the new division. According to the draft proposal for the division, they would divide their time between counseling duties, instruction of developmental courses, and administrative tasks germane to the operation of the new division; in so doing they would help to fill long-standing gaps in BCCC's student supports and services. By mid-summer, however, the administration decided that existing counselors in the separate Student Affairs Division would continue to provide all counseling services.

In addition, BCCC drafted a plan to overhaul its tutoring programs at the end of August. Tutoring up to this point had been poorly marketed and scattered across several departments and divisions. Students often did not know where to go for academic help, and if they did, they frequently found no one there to help.⁸⁴ The quality of tutoring was unknown—BCCC used mostly student tutors, paid minimum wage, and provided little or no formal training; there was little or no communication between instructors and tutors regarding students' needs and progress; and there was no evidence that tutoring at BCCC did or didn't work. Meanwhile, research shows that training is crucial to quality tutoring, and 70 percent of tutoring programs nationwide have a formal training component. At Cuyahoga Community College in

Cleveland, Ohio, for example, all tutors have degrees, many are faculty and/or retired educators, and those with doctorates earn \$10.90 an hour.

BCCC's draft tutoring proposal did address tutor qualifications, but it appears to have given no priority to certain problems that have made tutoring ineffective at BCCC. The "tutor job description" developed by the Division of Learning (as the academic division has been renamed) required each tutor to have a master's degree "in [their] academic discipline with teaching experience." The draft plan laid out the "duties and responsibilities" of tutors, but these said little about how tutoring would actually be organized and, perhaps more importantly, how it would tie into the BCCC's academic and developmental studies offerings to reinforce what happens in the classroom. Again, there was no outcomes assessment to measure the effectiveness of tutoring on student learning. Per the draft proposal, a tutor at BCCC would:

1. Tutor student-scheduled group study sessions to review principles, solve problems, and review for tests or tutor individually by appointment.
2. Administer testing instruments and write individual tutoring plans upon review of textbooks; refer students to other agencies as appropriate.
3. Facilitate reading and writing labs to develop writing, math, word processing, study and other academic skills.
4. Maintain and update confidential files and records, ensuring that ethical and legal guidelines are maintained.
5. Research and select learning materials, textbooks, software, and equipment to facilitate tutoring; may design specific handout, study and related materials.
6. Perform miscellaneous job-related duties as assigned.

According to the proposal, the tutoring program would be overseen by BCCC's Director of Academic Development Programs, a position that was vacant during most of the Fall 2003 semester.

At the December 2003 Board of Trustees meeting, the developmental math chair presented the prospect of considerably increased pass rates in developmental math for Fall 2003—in the neighborhood of 75 percent to 80 percent.⁸⁵ He attributed this success to a new tutoring program in which members of the faculty donated 10 hours of his/her time each week for much of the semester, but gave no further details. This indicates that tutoring has indeed been strengthened in developmental math, where it is needed most, but it does not reflect BCCC's proposal, nor does it appear to have

flowed from any other plan showing a structure and system for accountability. Moreover, Fall 2003 students never achieved the predicted pass rate of 80 percent for developmental math. According to BCCC’s 2003 Data Book, 48 percent of students passed MAT 80: Basic Arithmetic—even after extra tutoring that failing students were offered during the month of January to enable them to pass—and pass rates for MAT 81: Elementary Algebra and MAT 82: Intermediate Algebra were omitted due to a “high percentage of incomplete grades,” according to the Data Book.

As of October 2003, nothing more had been presented by the administration to the Board of Trustees regarding ongoing student supports reforms presented at the Board retreat in May. Yet, BCCC asserted in December that creation of a comprehensive, one-stop pre-admissions advising process for new students prior to placement testing was “in-process” under the Division of Student Affairs, and would be up and running in Summer 2004.⁸⁶

Few Internal Controls, Once Division Launched

The Dean of Arts and Sciences worked hard to get the new division off the ground, with the help and oversight of the academic VP, but her duties were split between two divisions once the semester began. As a result, there was no one person to take responsibility for “the overall planning, development, implementation, evaluation and supervision of the developmental education programs and staff of the center,” as stipulated by the division’s draft proposal.⁸⁷

Several other oversight and accountability measures also went by the wayside. A division “advisory board” comprised of 15 members from different sectors of the college, The Abell Foundation, BCPSS and the larger Baltimore community was to be formed and begin meeting regularly by mid-semester. This never materialized. Regular meetings between various key players in the division’s management and periodic progress reviews also never took place.

Results: Student Performance Data Inconclusive

Developmental pass rates that had risen in recent years continued their climb during Fall 2003, the first semester of results for the Center for Learning Programs, BCCC’s new developmental studies division. Data were first released in the college’s 2003 Data Book in December, and then re-released during Spring 2004.

**Percentage of BCCC Students Who Passed Developmental Courses
by Level, Fall 2003⁸⁸**

| Semester Course Number* | Mathematics⁸⁹ | | | Reading⁹⁰ | | | English | | |
|---|---------------------------------|------|-----|-----------------------------|-----|-----|----------------|-----|-----|
| | 80 | 81 | 82 | 80 | 81 | 82 | 80 | 81 | 82 |
| Fall 2002 | 40% | 36% | 46% | 69% | 60% | 61% | 59% | 64% | 56% |
| Fall 2003 | 48% | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 63% | 65% | 64% |
| (Data Book) | | | | | | | | | |
| Fall 2003 | 53% | 62% | 71% | -- | -- | -- | 63% | 65% | 64% |
| (Board of Trustees) | | | | | | | | | |
| % Increase from Fall 2002 to Fall 2003 | 66% | 100% | 73% | -- | -- | -- | 7% | 2% | 14% |

BCCC officials attribute the sudden and significant spikes in developmental math pass rates for Fall 2003—ranging from 66 percent to 100 percent—to the recent reforms it has implemented, namely changes in its tutoring program, second-chance courses, and the adoption of Academic Systems. But a number of factors make it difficult to determine to what extent, if any, these numbers actually represent increases in student learning, and thus true progress, particularly in the area of math – the beneficiary of the most emphasis and the most dramatic increases.

- The phased release of Fall 2003 data and discrepancies among them, raise questions about how “incompletes” were treated: Were students with incomplete grades included in the pass rates for Fall 2003 that were re-released in March 2004, subsequent to the Data Book’s publication? Moreover, faculty assert that these March 2004 pass rates also include students who took the second-chance makeup course over the winter. If true, this fact would invalidate this database for any study of effectiveness of the developmental program during the Fall semester.
- All developmental math instructors did not use uniform curricula and instructional delivery during Fall 2003 and subsequent makeup courses; in some cases, faculty assert, makeup course instructors did not even use Academic Systems or administer a final exam.
- The only developmental data issued by the college for Fall 2003 are the above-cited pass rates; there was no other form of outcomes assessment in place, and no system such as a single final exam administered to all students that measured how much students had learned over the course of the semester.

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- The only data issued by BCCC to measure the performance of its new Center for Learning Programs during Fall 2003 are the above-cited pass rates; there was no other outcomes assessment in place, and no single final exam given to all students to gauge progress made during the course. At the College of Southern Maryland, whose work with Academic Systems is touted by BCCC officials, one final exam is administered to all developmental math students. Evidence of the confusing launch of Academic Systems and the Center for Learning Programs during the first half of the Fall 2003 semester is inconsistent with results showing jumps in pass rates of 100 percent from one semester to the next.

“Nobody knows exactly what the curriculum is; there’s no standardized test at all. It makes it impossible to compare other semesters,” asserts one BCCC mathematics faculty member, noting that in the past a standard curriculum was followed and final exams were administered. “Why should we say that we made a difference for the regular [Fall 2003] semester?”

For these reasons, it is the conclusion of this report that the pass rate data issued by BCCC as a measure of its newly revamped developmental studies program, while encouraging, warrants further study.

Moving Forward: Division Still in Disarray in Spring 2004

While some of the hurdles that impeded the Fall 2003 launch of the new developmental division have since been worked out, many problems and inconsistencies have persisted into the Spring 2004 semester.

- Absent a developmental dean, the division still lacked leadership
- Not all faculty were qualified to teach developmental studies, per BCCC’s new credentialing policy
- Some computer labs still lacked computers and headphones—both critical to accessing Academic Systems materials
- Not all developmental math instructors were using the Academic Systems software, such that instruction and curricula varied widely throughout the developmental math program—a problem Academic Systems was intended to rectify
- Instructors were not following uniform guidelines when it came to testing, grading and generally evaluating student performance
- Tutoring and mid- and end-of-semester crash courses for students failing their developmental courses were not all using Academic Systems

D. Final Analysis: Poor Implementation Boiled Down to Leadership Basics

During the last two years, BCCC leaders have created an environment in which the flow of critical information is limited, assumptions are made, and according to critics and observers, confidence in BCCC’s leadership is fragile. It follows that this is an

environment in which meaningful reforms are not likely to win internal support and take root. It is not an environment in which the interests of students—best intentions aside—get priority.

Day-In and Day-Out, Leadership at BCCC is Lacking

The Ad Hoc Committee, Academic Systems and the new Center For Learning Programs were all reforms that had merit. What they lacked were implementation strategies to ensure their success, which, arguably, should surely have been present with the oversight of committed leadership.

Documented findings and observations, as presented in this paper, can leave little doubt among the most fair-minded that BCCC's current leadership appears to be marked by poor communication, non-inclusive decision-making, and limited relationships with others. Ultimately, these shortcomings have led to the absence of coherence and accountability that has marked each of BCCC's recent major reform efforts.

The institutional evaluation that accompanied the Middle States Commission's re-accreditation of BCCC in May 2003 cites the following concerns about communication and leadership at the college, factors the evaluation team deems critical to a healthy institution and, in this case, to BCCC's successful reform:

There are some concerns being verbalized about [the president's] willingness to establish broader collegial participation in governance, discussion and the broad issue of communication.

* * *

There seemed to be a general concern from all constituencies regarding lack of timely information and clear and effective communication . . . BCCC must develop a governance structure that will provide greater opportunities for communication, collaboration, and cooperation among divisions and between administration and other college constituencies—faculty, staff and students.

* * *

There appears to be a feeling that faculty does not have enough opportunities to express their concerns to the administration and that they do not feel they are full participants in the academic enterprise of the institution.

The June 2003 report by James L. Fisher also cited these as characteristics of the current administration that need to change:

President McKay needs to give additional consideration to how he communicates with the campus and avoid situations where it appears he is making off the cuff announcements of important decisions. We recommend he ensure that every member of the campus community have an email address and thereafter use an email "list-serve" and the institution's Web page to communicate a wide variety of information, data, actions and decisions. On occasion he should write a timely "Dear Colleagues" letter to all faculty and staff in order to provide them with important information and decisions, for example, those dealing with significant personnel decisions and financial cuts.

* * *

We believe Dr. McKay has the good will and support of the campus community and that nearly all individuals will provide him with their support and encouragement if he communicates with them and cultivates their understanding and support. For example, he needs to communicate his vision for the college to its most important constituencies.

In the months that followed the release of both of these reports, the administration acted in ways that highlighted their authors' personal concerns regarding leadership at BCCC, which, in some cases, ran completely counter to the reports' recommendations.

The administration's announcement in May that it would launch a new developmental division in academic year 2003-04 lacked specifics, such that most employees left for the summer and learned of major changes only upon their return in the fall. The fact that the division was planned during late summer by a select few angered many faculty members. As a result, the start of the Fall 2003 semester was marked by a very public dispute between BCCC's faculty and President McKay, starting with a September 5, 2003 "statement of concerns" drafted by the Faculty Senate. Among other things, the faculty asserted that "There has been poor communication of the processes by which decisions are being made . . . A meeting to discuss the reorganization of developmental studies was canceled after the president at a college-wide meeting casually announced that a decision had been made to establish a new department of developmental studies. There have been major decisions announced informally at open meetings with no prior discussion."⁹¹

In response to this and to a series of memos and meetings among faculty and administrators that followed, the President called a collegewide meeting on September 10 to address the faculty's concerns. He invited all those present into half-hour breakout sessions to put their concerns in writing and pledged to respond formally to those complaints, also in writing. The President presented his response to the growing complaints in which he offered criticisms of the college, faculty and staff, and his view of what he referred to as the unreasonable challenges he has faced since his 2002 arrival. He took no questions, and the session ended on an uncertain note.

According to faculty members, by semester's end, President McKay had not yet responded to those written concerns. He has not communicated officially his position on these issues. In November 2003, he intercepted a critical, two-page faculty email about himself and responded with a seven-page, point-for-point defense of his leadership of BCCC. He did not appear at the press conference BCCC held after he fired six top administrators in October, letting his executive assistant speak on the matter. He has never stated the rationale for the six terminations to the campus community, adding to the anxiety that the shakeup engendered.

The above examples of lackluster follow-through and communication at BCCC in the last two years make the case that the College's problems have not been confined to initiatives such as the Ad Hoc Committee, Academic Systems, and the launch of a new developmental division. Nor, evidence suggests, have they abated in the wake of public reports and recommendations. Similarly suggested is a leadership and management style among BCCC officials that appears reluctant to do the hard work that true reform and change entail.

In its March 2002 report, The Abell Foundation viewed BCCC's PASS program as a first step toward strengthening the college's ties to the Baltimore City Public School System in order to reduce the need for remediation among high school graduates enrolling at the college. The Foundation recommended that BCCC "improve its articulation with BCPSS curriculum," while asserting that "one goal of both institutions should be that that high school assessment tests and college-level placement tests cover equivalent material." BCCC's leadership set December 2004 as a deadline for accomplishing this, but it reported in December 2003 that there had been "no progress at this time."⁹²

Another example pertains to BCCC's Academic Master Plan. President McKay publicly announced last fall that by January 2004 he would release a draft of the plan called for in the Middle States evaluation that previous spring. The plan, circulated among faculty via email on January 13, 2004 and discussed at a faculty meeting and planning session on January 23, was a 45-slide PowerPoint presentation that simply listed existing and projected course offerings. In short, it amounted to an academic wish list and did not appear to satisfy the Middle States mandate that BCCC create a "clearly defined

Academic Master Plan that specifically addresses the issue of remediation and the areas for academic program development as well as program review.”⁹³ Moreover, when a senior faculty member sent an email to the president and the college’s academic leadership April 1, 2004 outlining a proposal for creating a detailed, thoughtful and inclusive process for devising an academic master plan, President McKay responded:

“In the ideal situation [the faculty member’s] view is appropriate. However, I know the timeline given to me by the Board and I do not have the flexibility to start over. Keep in mind that from the very beginning I indicated that this is the process that I would follow. Also keep in mind that there was early opposition from faculty to the whole idea of an academic master plan. The plan must be completed by June and then used to develop a long-range facilities plan. Any additional delays will delay the long-range facilities plan and the revision of the Capital Improvement Plan. It currently takes more than five years to get a new building into the States Capital Improvement Plan. We have needs that cannot wait. . . . We do not have the flexibility of time to start over. The College [should] have developed this plan years ago.”⁹⁴

The record makes clear that there have been many missed deadlines with no or insufficient explanation provided. When extending the college’s re-accreditation, for example, the Middle States Commission stipulated that BCCC complete by December 15, 2003 a “revised ‘comprehensive’ mission statement for the institution and the outline of a process for implementing a collegially-based, strategic planning process for addressing both the recommendations of the self-study and the recommendations of the [Middle States evaluation] team.” Though President McKay assigned a committee to work on this through the Fall 2003 semester, the December deadline came and went.

Time and again, college officials have also produced status reports and plans that are dated, recycled, and include both information that is no longer correct or relevant and names of responsible persons no longer at BCCC. Examples include the strategic plans BCCC submits to the state Department of Budget and Management each summer, the annual Performance Accountability Reports it submits to the Maryland Higher Education Commission, its Self-Study it submitted to the Middle States Commission in early 2003, and its December 2003 interim accounting of reforms.

Leadership on BCCC’s Board Is Also Inconsistent

Leadership at the college starts and stops at the top, and while daily leadership of BCCC appears inconsistent, this contradictory behavior is also reflected in the decisions and actions of BCCC’s Board of Trustees. The nine-member body is one that focuses on isolated detail versus global issues and critical oversight on the one hand, and occasionally usurps the President’s authority on the other.

Monthly Board meetings are run by the President and his staff. The Board reviews meeting agendas in advance and approves minutes after the fact, but the President's staff sets the agendas and writes up and circulates the minutes. Meetings have both closed and public sessions, but the latter rarely entail any discussion of policies and plans that affect the college's ability to execute its mission. For example, according to board meeting minutes, not one board meeting during the 2002-03 academic year recorded a discussion about the low rates of student success. Instead, board meetings focused largely on procedural issues such as approving the academic calendar and renewing employee contracts, or simply bringing the Board up to speed on issues the President and his staff deemed important. For example, meetings following the Board's May 2003 retreat devoted much time to updates on building renovations, but until Fall 2003 there had been no mention during public meetings of the launch of a new developmental studies division slated for Fall 2003. Meanwhile, the first detailed public report to the Board on the new developmental division didn't take place until February 2004, well after the division was launched.⁹⁵

A more concrete example of the Board's failure to take leadership has been the unremarkable record of results. In January 2003, for example, it raised questions about student supports.⁹⁶ The issue resurfaced at several subsequent meetings and, in May 2003, the administration made a presentation on how it would reform this critical student service. As of October there had been no further public word on student supports reforms, no presentation by the administration, and no prodding from the Board. Until recently, the Board did not even have working committees, so that members did little work outside of meetings during these past two years of reforms.

This hands-off approach is not the role the Middle States Commission views as critical for BCCC's Board. "The extent to which BCCC's faculty, administration and governing board immerse themselves in, and raise questions about, the institution's performance, study their findings, search for remedies, and demonstrate improvement in educational excellence is a primary indicator of institutional effectiveness and learning," it stated in its May 2003 evaluation.⁹⁷ "Students, staff and faculty expressed concern over the current lack of accountability."

The Board, like BCCC itself, has been driven in part by personalities and leadership styles over the years. Roger Lyons, the longtime former president of Baltimore's Urban League, was the Board's fourth chair in five years. He led it from 1995 through 2000, the longest tenure of any BCCC Board chair to date. During his chairmanship, he was criticized by some Board members for collaborating closely with BCCC's president and minimizing Board discussion about critical college issues as a result. Meanwhile, some members assert that the current Board has again engaged in isolated decision-making. More recently, a split down the middle throughout the Fall 2003 semester had one Board faction continually deferring to the current president and the other trying, with limited success, to challenge him.

This rift was very publicly displayed in October 2003 when, following the president’s firing of six top administrators, including three of BCCC’s five vice presidents, the Board voted four to three for a resolution backing the President’s action and denouncing his critics among faculty and staff.⁹⁸ Opponents of the resolution said their position represented a disagreement over protocol, not a lack of presidential support, but the vote appeared to communicate that Board confidence in the president was divided at best. The incident also pointed to the Board’s own reluctance to assume strong leadership of, and responsibility for, BCCC, at a time when both appeared to be lacking. The firings came on the heels of an ongoing dispute between the President and faculty about the direction of the college, when morale among employees was low. Yet in the shakeup’s midst, the President declined to comment or appear at a press conference to explain his actions, intensifying fear and distrust among faculty and staff. Beyond noncommittal quotes in the press, the Board was unseen and unheard in the wake of the upheaval.

“We recognize and fully support the president’s power to make all administrative decisions of the day-to-day operations of the college, including hiring, terminations, and reassignments,” the resolution stated. “We recognize and fully support that the president is empowered to reorganize the college and all of its departments and divisions in a manner he deems necessary to support the vision and mission of the institution.” Following the vote on the resolution one board member, Dr. Ellestine Grant, the former chair who oversaw President McKay’s hiring in 2002, said “I’m with the president come blank or high water.” Another stated, “We need to stand behind the president in public as well as behind closed doors.” Neither statement did much to bolster increasingly shaky public confidence in BCCC and the oversight abilities of the current Board.

Lately, the Board has been described by members themselves and close observers as providing leadership that can only be termed as vacillating—alternately closely, and then distantly, engaged. A recent example: President McKay’s appointments of two \$80,000-a-year deans were rejected by the Board at its December 2003 meeting because both hires were the wives of other Baltimore-area college presidents. (Savannah Jones, hired by BCCC to head up the new developmental studies division as the Dean of Learning Programs, is the wife of Dr. Andrew Jones, President of the Community College of Baltimore County’s Catonsville campus. Judith Rozie-Battle, hired as Dean of Legal Studies, is the wife of Stanley F. Battle, President of Coppin State University.) The Board also fired the Vice President of Learning, appointed by the President in June 2003 to serve until a permanent Vice President was hired.

At the December 2003 meeting, the Board also unanimously adopted a new policy regarding delegation of authority that prevents the President from hiring ranking administrators, allowing him only to “recommend individuals for hiring as Vice Presidents, Executive Directors, Deans, and Chairs and equivalent positions report-

ing directly to the President.”⁹⁹ The policy states, “Individuals recommended for these positions shall be hired only with the approval of the Board after conducting a search process as approved by the Board. Hiring into these positions will be effective only after Board approval.”

Some changes in Board leadership and composition in the last year generated promise of more activist and accountable governing body. Following the appointment of Rosetta Kerr Wilson as chair and Katrina Riddick as a board member, some hard questions were asked, and limited discussion about policy issues ensued. Wilson, however, resigned amidst the split over President McKay’s leadership in October, and her replacement, Board member James Harris, has not fanned the glimmer of activism that was ignited a year ago.

Concerns About BCCC’s Leadership Extend Beyond Baltimore

The series of newspaper articles in Fall 2003 about the firing of six ranking administrators at BCCC and the resignation of its Board chair raised concerns at MHEC about BCCC’s leadership, and state officials met with President McKay to discuss the stability and direction of the college.

Issues of BCCC leadership were again brought to MHEC’s attention in February 2004, when BCCC’s Faculty Senate wrote a three-page letter to Dr. Calvin Burnett, Maryland’s Acting Secretary of Higher Education, requesting an investigation by the Maryland Higher Education Commission into numerous problems pertaining to the leadership of BCCC’s President and Board.¹⁰⁰ Dr. Burnett responded by sending a letter on February 19, 2004 to President McKay and BCCC Board of Trustees chair James Harris in which he stated that MHEC would carefully consider the faculty’s request.¹⁰¹ According to one MHEC official, meetings between MHEC and BCCC’s leadership have since taken place, although he declined to elaborate.

V. Impact of Unfulfilled Reforms



The larger consequences of the poor implementation of reform efforts outlined above are perhaps best illustrated in two different, but very critical, areas. Both efforts have suffered from the inertia and lack of infrastructure for reforms of the last decade, and will continue to suffer until and unless the status quo is shaken. Both also show specifically how neither students nor the college itself are reaching their potential to actualize BCCC's mission and build Baltimore City's workforce. These two areas are:

- Developmental mathematics, which has long posed the largest academic obstacle to student success at the college; and
- BCCC's allied health programs, the area of greatest need for graduates in today's workforce environment, and the area in which BCCC graduates are most likely to succeed.

A. Developmental Mathematics: BCCC's Most Critical, Enduring Challenge

BCCC has historically struggled to provide a sound developmental mathematics program. In April 1993, after its decennial evaluation of BCCC, the Middle States Commission cited the need for BCCC to develop a "clear, unifying philosophy of basic skills instruction in mathematics."¹⁰² When Middle States returned in April 2003, it reiterated its decade-old concerns about mathematics when it said in its re-accreditation that BCCC "should consider developing courses that develop students' skills to succeed in college-level mathematics, as required by the State, but do so in a way that employs more concrete, applied methods responsive to the different learning styles of developmental students."

Despite numerous similar statements by outside evaluators and attempted reforms over the years by BCCC in response, a vast majority of incoming BCCC students still place into developmental math, and a majority still never complete developmental courses.

Encouraging Signs, But What Do They Reflect?

Pass rates increased notably during 2001-02 and 2002-03, the most recent complete years for which data are available, and this is a significant feat for which BCCC deserves credit: The pass rate for MAT 80 increased from 28 percent in Fall 1998 to 40 percent in Fall 2002; the pass rate for MAT 81 increased from 31 percent in Fall 1998 to 36 percent during that time; and the pass rate for MAT 82 increased from 41 percent to 46 percent.¹⁰³ These increases, however, come with questions. They predate the significant reforms made to BCCC's developmental program in the last year, and it remains unclear why they occurred. Moreover, the data from 2001-02 and 2002-03 were collected during a tumultuous time and are not substantial enough to establish progress trends.

Likewise for developmental data from Fall 2003. Data released by BCCC in Spring 2004 for the previous fall semester show 100% increases in developmental math pass rates from Fall 2002 to Fall 2003. While college officials credit Fall 2003 reform initiatives with the higher numbers, the implementation problems that plagued the semester and the concern of using only one semester of data raise questions about such a cause-and-effect conclusion.

Apparent improvements in developmental math at the college aside, many students who do complete the developmental math sequence are still unable to perform basic mathematics functions when they reach the college level. For example, students must master the developmental mathematics sequence prior to being accepted into BCCC's nursing program. Yet one of the first things required in the nursing orientation is a basic math test, and many score as low as "40 percent, 50 percent and 60 percent."¹⁰⁴ (These low scores do not prohibit students from advancing to their first-semester courses, including Calculation of Medication in Nursing, but fewer than half advance beyond the first semester—due in part, department staff contend, to their struggles with math.

Student performance at the college level offers one source of evidence that BCCC has not significantly reformed developmental math. A look at the actual reforms the college has not implemented offers more: A significant body of research in recent years has identified relatively simple changes BCCC could implement to improve its remedial math instruction, many of which have been discussed at length by college officials and hailed as necessary actions. Yet, BCCC has not taken these actions to lower the barriers that keep students from successfully moving through its program in developmental math.

Clarifying Requirements; Eliminating the Implicit Policy of Math-for-All

Maryland requires that all public two- and four-year college students master mathematics at a level "beyond intermediate algebra" in order to obtain a degree. BCCC's interpretation of that requirement may be onerous, given that a majority of its students never obtain two-year degrees and a small number transfer to four-year institutions.

In 1996, this statewide college-level math standard was established, prompting a restructuring of BCCC's developmental math program.¹⁰⁵ All two- and four-year degree-seeking students now had to complete a "college-level" mathematics course in order to graduate (The State was striving for uniform standards to ensure that community college transfers would arrive at four-year schools able to perform at the college level.) As a result, intermediate algebra (algebra II or trigonometry), which had previously been considered "college-level" at BCCC, became a developmental course and, thus, a prerequisite for all college-level math courses. (Prior to this, the math graduation requirement was met by taking one of three very basic math courses that had

only arithmetic as their prerequisites, the most popular being a “Math in Society” course designed for non-mathematicians.) In the wake of the 1996 standard, degree-seeking students now had to pass not only intermediate algebra, but a more advanced college-level course as well.

At BCCC, where academic advising in recent years has been scant, incoming students have been treated as though this State requirement applies to them, whether or not they are pursuing an Associate degree or transfer option. Students seeking certificates (as opposed to degrees), like all new BCCC students, must take the Accuplacer placement test upon enrollment, and many place into developmental math courses as a result. Must they pass all three courses that comprise the full developmental math sequence to earn a certificate? It’s unclear. While only one-third of the certificate curricula require math courses at the college level, the college has been communicating that all students must complete the developmental math sequence, regardless of program requirements or academic goals. Per BCCC’s 2000-02 course catalogue (p. 42), “All developmental studies courses . . . must be completed in sequence within each discipline, beginning with the level indicated by the student’s Accuplacer scores.”

Given the confusion and potential inequity of BCCC’s application of its math requirements, The Abell Foundation recommended in its March 2002 report that the college re-evaluate, change, and effectively communicate to students the math requirements specific to all certificate and degree programs, and that these requirements be based on what will truly help students succeed in their fields versus what is needed to get into a university or college. This recommendation was later embraced by BCCC’s Ad Hoc Committee on the Reform of Developmental Education and reiterated by The Abell Foundation consultant. In Spring 2002 the consultant reviewed the syllabi of all BCCC programs to determine which ones actually required a college-level math course, and hence all three prerequisite courses that comprise the developmental sequence. The consultant reported that just 12 of BCCC’s 34 certificate programs require college-level mathematics courses, and recommended that BCCC consider exempting certain certificate students from at least the highest developmental math course, MAT 82: Intermediate Algebra, as a result.¹⁰⁶

BCCC’s president, meanwhile, has been consistently vocal in his support for removing math requirements where possible. In an October 2002 meeting with the Greater Baltimore Committee, he stated that BCCC should indeed consider reducing math requirements for some programs where students do not need math to succeed.¹⁰⁷ In subsequent discussions with The Abell Foundation about drafting strategic priorities in Winter 2002-03, he agreed that BCCC should undertake a thorough curricular review of its programs to ascertain whether all students in all of BCCC’s certificate programs required MAT 82, a position he restated in May 2003 during discussions about the impending overhaul of BCCC’s developmental program. Yet as of the end

of the Fall 2003 semester, all students whose Accuplacer scores reflected a need for remediation were still being channeled through all three levels of developmental math, regardless of their academic intentions or goals.

Making Math Requirements More Realistic

Where Maryland’s college-level math requirement does clearly apply—among students pursuing Associate degrees and transfers to four-year institutions—BCCC should reduce its college-level math course prerequisites, making it easier for students to get through the developmental sequence and reach the college level.

As noted above, there are three levels of developmental math at BCCC: MAT 80 (Basic Arithmetic), MAT 81 (Elementary Algebra, the high school equivalent of which is Algebra I) and MAT 82 (Intermediate Algebra, the high school equivalent of which is Algebra II). Based on Accuplacer placement test scores, approximately three-quarters of incoming students consistently place into the lowest developmental course, MAT 80; the bulk of the remainder place into MAT 81, and only a handful place into the highest developmental course, MAT 82.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, pass rates for MAT 80 and MAT 81 are consistently lower than for MAT 82, such that lowest-performing math students, a majority at BCCC, are getting stuck at the lowest levels. Many spend several semesters trying to reach MAT 82, and many give up and drop out before they succeed.

Yet BCCC requires MAT 82 for admission to all college-level math courses, and completion of at least one college-level math course is required by the State of all two- and four-year college students as part of its general education requirement. The State does not, however, dictate course prerequisites, which it leaves up to the individual institution based on “the best interests of and potential success of the students in the general education courses,” according to a September 2002 statement by the Maryland Higher Education Commission intended to clarify what Maryland’s college students must have in the way of math credits.¹⁰⁹ As long as students master a single college-level math course in the course of obtaining a degree, the State has no mandates about what students achieve at the developmental level.

Meanwhile, BCCC faculty and staff disagree on whether MAT 82 content is actually necessary for BCCC’s first three college-level math courses: MAT 107, Modern Elementary Statistics; MAT 111, Contemporary Mathematics (a course designed to illustrate the nature of math, its role in society, and its practical and abstract aspects); and MAT 125, Finite Mathematics (a course that covers topics useful to students in business and social sciences with an emphasis on applications versus theory). In Summer 2002, the Ad Hoc Committee on Reform of Developmental Education’s Subcommittee on Curriculum, Delivery and Placement conducted a review of all BCCC programs’ math requirements and interviewed program coordinators and deans to determine what math education students really needed. The subcommittee

found that many program coordinators, whose programs require the college-level statistics course, “expressed satisfaction with the statistics requirement, but frustration with the amount of developmental coursework their students must go through to get there.”¹¹⁰

So when the strategic priorities that the consultant advanced to the administration in November 2002 included a recommendation for removing MAT 82 as an across-the-board college-level prerequisite, BCCC’s administration agreed. It reiterated its position in May 2003, at the same time the Middle States evaluation recommended that BCCC re-think the content of its developmental math sequence.¹¹¹ Then in December 2003, the administration stated that attempts to “reassess its requirement for college-level” math courses in all majors and programs are “on-going,” and “will be adjusted based on [the college’s] revised General Education core.”¹¹² Finally, BCCC’s administration asserted at the time that the college is, as the Abell report recommends, “working with State higher education officials [and] revisit[ing] the decision to define basic college-level math as content beyond intermediate algebra. . . . A state-wide committee is in place. Rules have been clarified and college can make necessary adjustments.”

Despite the verbal nods to change, MAT 82 remained a requirement for completing BCCC’s developmental sequence during the Spring 2004 semester.

Re-evaluating Placement Test “Cut Scores”

Another recommendation, also embraced by BCCC’s President but not enacted, was the lowering of internal cut, or passing, scores on the math portion of the Accuplacer placement test to match those of other community colleges.

State higher education officials set the test cut scores that determine whether students place into developmental or college-level courses, but individual community colleges may establish internal cut scores to determine where students fall within their developmental sequences. At BCCC, where students struggle most with the math portion of the placement test, internal math cut scores are higher than those at most other Maryland community colleges. While incoming students at BCCC must score 62 or higher on the elementary algebra portion of the Accuplacer to place into MAT 82, for example, students have to score only 55 at CCBC-Catonsville to place into intermediate algebra; 50 at CCBC-Dundalk; 50 at CCBC-Essex; and 54 at Prince George’s Community College.¹¹³ In setting the higher bar, BCCC appears to be putting its students at an unfair disadvantage by, in effect, holding them back.

Members of the math department at BCCC looked into the matter in mid-2002, but when the new President arrived soon thereafter, he requested a more thorough review and assigned a new committee to conduct it. More than a year later, BCCC’s

internal cut scores for math placement remain the same as they've been for the last three years. Meanwhile, BCCC's leadership declared in December 2003 that its Division of Student Affairs will—to quote The Abell Foundation's recommendation—“re-examine cutoff scores for remedial math courses to ensure that students are being placed in the right course offerings” in Spring 2004.¹¹⁴ (In April 2004, the Statewide Mathematics Group, a group of post-secondary math instructors, discussed lowering and making uniform all community colleges Accuplacer cut scores in mathematics—a move that would affect current cut scores at BCCC.)

The Bottom Line: Math Remains BCCC's Biggest Developmental Challenge

According to the 2002 Abell report, 95 percent of incoming students required math remediation in Fall 2000, and of those, 30 percent on average passed their remedial courses that semester. Two years later the numbers are better, but still bleak: 92 percent of new BCCC students required math remediation in Fall 2002, and pass rates among them averaged 41 percent.¹¹⁵

Just as troubling as those statistics is the inertia that appears to obstruct BCCC's ability to effect true and necessary change. Indeed, two of the bold reforms initiated in the last year are designed in large part to affect developmental mathematics: BCCC adopted online instructional software and launched a separate developmental studies division. Despite these large-scale changes, however, the same placement procedures and criteria remain in place, as do the same program requirements and college-level prerequisites. As a result, students aren't getting the academic foundation they need to succeed at what they came to BCCC for in the first place: to take college-level courses and boost their competitive standing in the workplace.

B. Health Services Programs: Mission Unaccomplished

“To educate and train a world-class workforce for Baltimore.”
--BCCC's mission statement¹¹⁶

“The college does not have a comprehensive offering of programs in place that address the workforce needs of Baltimore City.”
--President McKay in a November 2003 statement to the BCCC community¹¹⁷

Among BCCC's Allied Health and Human Services programs are the college's most successful certificate and degree programs, with some of the highest licensing exam pass rates in the State, that also command the highest salaries among BCCC graduates. Yet BCCC's struggle to move students through these programs and, in turn,

· compete with other health services programs to meet local workforce demand also
· illustrate the consequences of its troubled reform efforts. In stark terms, problems in
· the allied health programs underscore the fundamental challenges BCCC faces, and
· the price of not overcoming those challenges. More broadly, they demonstrate the
· significant gap between the college's mission and its operations.

· ***The Good News: BCCC's Vast Potential, Competitive Position***

· **Health Programs at the College**

· BCCC offers 27 different Associate degrees (D) and certificates (C) through its pro-
· grams in Allied Health Services and Allied Human Services.

· **Allied Health Services**

· (9 degrees, 7 certificates)

· Dental Hygiene—D

· Emergency Medical Services—D

· Emergency Medical Services Paramedic—C

· Cardiac Rescue Technician—C

· Emergency Medical Technician-Basic—C

· Emergency Medical Technician-Intermed.—C

· Dietary Manager—C

· Dietary Technician—D

· Respiratory Care—D

· Elderly—C Respiratory Therapy—D

· Coding Specialist—C

· Health Information Technology—D

· Physical Therapist Assistant—D

· Surgical Technology—D

· Nursing—D

· Practical Nursing—C

· **Allied Human Services**

· (6 degrees, 5 certificates)

· Addiction Counseling—C

· Addiction Counseling—D

· Human Services Aide—C

· Human Services Assistant—D

· Human Services Transfer—D

· Gerontology—D

· Gerontology—C

· Personal/Community Care

· Provider—C

· Cross-Cultural Services to Devel.

· Disabilities & Human Devel.—D

· Mental Health Technology—D

· **Rewards Reaped by Program Graduates**

· According to BCCC's Health Occupations Workforce Initiative, graduates of the col-
· lege's Allied Health programs are among its greatest success stories. Of the eight
· programs, three—Dental Hygiene, Nursing and Respiratory Therapy—have averaged
· pass rates on licensing exams of more than 90 percent during the last four years for
· which data are available (from the 1997-98 academic year through the 2000-01 aca-
· demic year); The Emergency Medical Services and Physical Therapist Assistant pro-
· grams have averaged pass rates between 80 percent and 90 percent; only one pro-
· gram, Health Information Technology, has averaged a pass rate of less than 80 per-
· cent.¹¹⁸ Graduates of these programs also earn more than graduates of other BCCC
· programs: Graduates of five of the eight allied health programs earn average salaries

exceeding \$30,000 within two years of graduation. Within 10 years of completing these programs, graduates earn salaries in excess of \$45,000.¹¹⁹

Growing Workforce Demand

The Baltimore region's growing health-related workforce needs are not unique; qualified health care workers across the country are in huge demand. Perhaps most critical among these needs is the nursing shortage plaguing hospitals, a shortage in an area that provides a significant source of employment in Baltimore and its region.

According to the Association of Maryland Hospitals and Health Systems, there are 23 major hospitals and health systems in Baltimore City and Baltimore County, and there is a current shortage of 2,000 nurses statewide.¹²⁰ The number of nurses in Maryland hospitals has increased in the last four years by 3 percent, but the combination of increased admissions, greater acuity levels of patients and increasingly complex technology has simultaneously bolstered demand. As a result, the vacancy rate for registered nurses at Maryland hospitals was 16 percent in 2001, compared to a national average vacancy rate of 13 percent. In the face of such short supply, hospitals have been forced to rely heavily on much costlier temporary nurses from agencies. In 2001 Maryland hospitals utilized the full-time equivalent of 1,386 agency nurses; in 2002 that number rose 37 percent to 1,898. Exacerbating Maryland's nursing shortage is high turnover among hospital nurses, which rose from 8 percent in 1996 to 15 percent in 2001.¹²¹

But the problem is not confined to hospitals alone. In nursing homes, vacancy and turnover rates are even higher. According to the American Health Care Association, the vacancy rate for staff registered nurses at Maryland nursing homes is 23 percent, and for licensed practical nurses 17 percent—some 800 positions in all. Turnover rates in nursing homes are 57 percent for registered nurses and 56 percent for licensed practical nurses.¹²²

BCCC's Strategic Position

BCCC is strategically positioned to meet these local workforce needs with its array of programs; 47 percent of its career students enroll in, or intend to enroll in health-services programs compared to 35 percent statewide. The Health Occupations Workforce Initiative cites major factors fueling Maryland's nursing shortage; some of these speak directly to the strengths and potential of the college:

- Minorities comprise 36 percent of the State's general population, but only 26 percent of its registered nurses. Men, meanwhile, comprise just 5 percent of registered nurses in Maryland. (Minority and male representation of licensed practical nurses is better, at 50 percent and 11 percent, respectively.) As a majority black college in a majority African American city, BCCC is better positioned than most other Maryland community colleges to attract African American nursing candi-

dates. Moreover, because its student population is overwhelmingly female, there is a huge untapped pool of potential nursing candidates among the City's African American men.

- Fewer Maryland students are graduating from colleges and universities with degrees in nursing. The number of nursing Associate degrees issued dropped from 982 in 1994 to 689 in 2001, a 30 percent decline in eight years. While nursing enrollment increased in 2001 for the first time in those eight years, state officials project it will be several years before that increase translates into greater numbers of actual nursing degrees.
- BCCC's own numbers reflect these statewide trends. It has high rates of attrition among its new nursing students due to low levels of academic preparedness and major life challenges that limit students' ability to go to school and study. By working closely with Baltimore City schools, and by vastly improving its own developmental education and counseling and advising programs, the college could better prepare students for its nursing program, improving their odds of academic success once they enroll.
- High school and college students don't seriously consider nursing when weighing their career options, in part because the requirements of the profession are misunderstood, and nursing programs are often mistaken for vocational training. By working more closely with the City's high schools, its primary student pipeline, BCCC could better promote its program offerings, particularly nursing, among prospective students.

For all these reasons, BCCC is in a position to generate significant numbers of candidates for the local health care industry's growing number of jobs.

The Bad News: Low Enrollment, Scant and Slow Student Success

Declining Enrollment

According to the Health Occupations Workforce Initiative, total enrollment in BCCC's Allied Health programs dropped from 398 students in Fall 1999 to 302 students in Fall 2002, a decline of 24 percent. Enrollment in its Allied Human Services programs increased slightly, by 6 percent, during that same time (from 344 in Fall 1999 to 365 in Fall 2002), but the significant drop in Allied Health candidates during those years was troubling, given the local industry's growing workforce needs, particularly in nursing.

Heading into the 2003-04 academic year, the outlook was decidedly rosier: enrollment in Allied Human Services jumped 12 percent (from 365 to 408) from Fall 2002 to Fall 2003, and enrollment in Allied Health jumped 17 percent (from 302 to 354)

during that time.¹²³ Yet Allied Health enrollment at BCCC still lags significantly behind late 1990s figures. Moreover, increasing allied health enrollment at BCCC isn't a simple matter of recruiting more students. BCCC has perennially struggled to attract and retain qualified faculty to teach its nursing courses, for example, in large part because it cannot compete with hospital and private sector pay scales. It is also limited by the number of clinical sites available in Baltimore City, for which there is stiff competition among different institutions' nursing programs.¹²⁴

At the same time, many of BCCC's health and human services programs are on the verge of becoming obsolete and do not attract students. According to the Health Occupations Workforce Initiative, 12 of BCCC's Allied Health and Allied Human Services majors (almost one-third of majors in this area) had fewer than 10 students enrolled in Fall 2002, and another eight (one-fifth) of these programs have experienced steadily declining enrollments over the last four years. In short, justification for half of the Allied Health and Allied Human Services programs is questionable, based on recent enrollment trends—an argument even the administration has made to support its calls for change. In Fall 2003, President McKay cited "low enrollment programs [that] are allowed to operate without close evaluation and termination" as evidence that "the status quo is not working for a majority of our students."¹²⁵

Low Graduation Rates

Many of the college's Allied Health and Allied Human Services programs enroll few students, and they are graduating even fewer.¹²⁶ Nursing and dental hygiene produce the most graduates—on average, 34 and 18 students respectively during the 2000-01 and 2001-02 academic years. In the case of nursing, this amounts to approximately one-fifth the number of students BCCC's nursing programs enroll each year. The college's Addiction Counseling program ranks third, having graduated, on average, 12 students during each of those same two years; physical therapist assistant ranks fourth, with, on average, nine graduates; and human services aide and dietary manager certificate are tied for fifth, with an average of eight graduates in academic years 2000-01 and 2001-02.

During these same academic years, meanwhile, there were seven Allied Health and Human Services majors that graduated no students at all, and there were nine majors that awarded one to four certificates or degrees.¹²⁷

Long, Slow Haul to Graduation

Despite the fact that Associate degree majors are designed as two-year programs, and certificates should, in theory, take just one year to attain, most students at BCCC take much longer to complete their program and obtain a certificate or degree. Most are enrolled part-time, juggling jobs and personal responsibilities along with their studies.

According to the Health Occupations Workforce Initiative, only three of BCCC's Allied Health and Allied Human Services majors had average median completion rates of five years or less during the 2000-01 and 2001-02 academic years, and 14 had completion rates of between five and 10 years, including nursing and licensed practical nursing. Below is the average length of time it takes BCCC students to complete the programs that during 2000-01 and 2001-02 issued the most certificates and/or degrees:¹²⁸

| | |
|--|----------|
| Nursing (Registered Nurse, AAS Degree) | 7 years |
| Nursing (Licensed Practice Nurse, Certificate) | 8+ years |
| Dental Hygiene (AAS Degree) | 4+ years |
| Addiction Counseling (AAS Degree) | 5+ years |
| Physical Therapist Assistant (Certificate) | 11 years |
| Human Services Aide (Certificate) | 7+ years |
| Dietary Manager (Certificate) | 1+ years |

Vacancies Create a Leadership Void

During the last year, BCCC has consistently pledged to bolster its Allied Health programs and make them more competitive. In the 2003 Performance Accountability Report it submitted to the Maryland Higher Education Commission, the college asserted it would help meet the health care industry's workforce needs "by strengthening its allied health programs and expanding workforce training and employment preparation for Baltimore's healthcare workers."¹²⁹ Yet as of November 2003, when the State's performance accountability report was published, top leadership positions in BCCC's Allied Health program remained vacant. There was no dean of the Division of Allied Health and Human Services, and no chair for either the Allied Health Department or the Allied Human Services Department. (In March 2004, an interim dean was appointed for the Allied Health and Human Services Division, and an interim chairperson was appointed for the Allied Human Services Department.¹³⁰)

Stakes for BCCC: Growing Competition in Health Care Training

BCCC has enjoyed a respectable status when it comes to training students for the health services fields, especially for those seeking certificates and Associate degrees in nursing. But that is quickly changing as private career schools make inroads in the area, and community colleges in surrounding jurisdictions vie for Baltimore City students.

According to the Health Occupations Workforce Initiative, there are 12 private career schools in Maryland offering allied health programs, and, in all areas but dental assistant and nursing assistant, they are experiencing steady increases in enrollment—almost 25 percent over the last five years. These schools are experiencing enrollment declines in two areas that overlap with BCCC, but they're also experiencing the most growth in a program BCCC doesn't even offer—nuclear medicine. This spike in pri-

vate career school enrollments has yet to translate into increases in numbers of degrees awarded and local health services employees generated, but the schools' presence in local post-secondary education is something BCCC should take seriously. During 2003, Baltimore's own Sojourner-Douglass College spent much of the year designing and preparing to launch a licensed practical nursing program that would go head-to-head with BCCC's.¹³¹

At the same time, BCCC faces competition for all students from its closest community college neighbor, the Community College of Baltimore County. Baltimore City students account for 12 percent of CCBC's enrollment, its second largest enrollment source (after students from Baltimore County).¹³² Even more striking is the breakdown of these Baltimore City enrollment figures at CCBC, and the rate at which they are rising.

Between Fall 2000 and Fall 2003, the number of City residents at CCBC increased 18 percent, from 2,013 to 2,374—a figure that is one-third of BCCC's own credit enrollment. Many of the credit students at CCBC from Baltimore City fit the dominant BCCC student profile—part-time, African American, female and in their mid-20s to mid-30s—but a good number represent constituencies BCCC has been only marginally successful in recruiting. In short, CCBC is not only succeeding at attracting students from the City, it is eroding BCCC's current base and making inroads in areas where BCCC is struggling to grow. According to Fall 2003 enrollment data, Baltimore City students at CCBC and BCCC compare as follows:¹³³

- CCBC: 54 percent African American; 37 percent white
BCCC: 88 percent African American; 9 percent white
- CCBC: 67 percent female; 33 percent male
BCCC: 74 percent female; 26 percent male
- CCBC: 64 percent part-time; 36 percent full-time
BCCC: 68 percent part-time; 32 percent full-time

Echoing these numbers, officials at CCBC are candid about their efforts to recruit students from Baltimore City. In Spring 2003 they reported that City residents' applications for the 2003-04 academic year were up 27 percent from the previous spring.¹³⁴ In addition to this growing stable of credit students, they noted that CCBC also enrolls about 5,000 non-credit students from Baltimore City.

C. Case Study: Nursing Shows Scope, Depth of BCCC’s Challenge

Nursing Embodies Key BCCC Challenges

The rigor of a nursing education limits both a college’s capacity to train nursing students, and students’ capacity to succeed. “Learning to be a nurse is really different,” one BCCC nursing department representative says. “Even good students struggle. You have to learn a new language, you have to be very precise, and there are higher critical thinking requirements [than in many other programs].” Add to those standards and requirements the academic and socioeconomic hurdles most new BCCC students already face, and for those interested in pursuing nursing, the prospects of success are daunting. BCCC’s lack of many of the additional academic supports students need renders their prospects altogether dim.

The nursing program at BCCC shows in concrete terms the nature of its struggles to educate its students—from the low skill levels and life challenges of nursing candidates to its own inadequate developmental education program; a poor system of advising, counseling and student supports; and leadership gaps. It also shows the consequences of those struggles, namely high attrition and low graduation rates.

Nursing Is One of BCCC’s Most Rigorous Programs

There are two nursing programs at BCCC, one that trains registered nurses and awards an Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN), and one that trains licensed practical nurses and awards a Practical Nursing (PN) certificate.

Students who complete the ADN program and pass the NCLEX-RN (National Council Licensing Exam for Registered Nurses) become registered nurses in the State with starting salaries that average about \$40,000.¹³⁵ The ADN program also permits graduates to transfer—without loss of credit—to any Maryland institution to earn a Bachelor of Science degree in nursing, or BSN.

Students who complete the PN program and pass the NCLEX-PN (National Council Licensing Exam for Practical Nurses) become licensed practical nurses (LPNs) with a starting salary typically in the \$28,000 to \$32,000 range.¹³⁶ LPNs work under the supervision of registered nurses and/or physicians to provide care in varied health care settings, but they have received training in a similar set of technical skills as registered nurses.

The level of rigor required by the nursing curriculum makes it unique among BCCC’s academic offerings; nursing requires a broader and more exact knowledge base than most other programs. This standard, combined with numerous other factors, holds down enrollment, course completion, and the awarding of nursing certificates and

degrees—on average, 10 certificates and 30 degrees each year. Meanwhile, BCCC boasts a high pass rate on nursing licensing exams—consistently in the high 90 percent range, until 2001-02, when it dipped to 88 percent.¹³⁷

Before enrolling in any of BCCC’s nursing programs, students must take the Accuplacer placement test in reading, writing, and math and complete the sequence of developmental courses dictated by their Accuplacer scores. In addition, students must demonstrate their knowledge of high school biology and chemistry by passing BCCC’s own placement test in these subjects or passing the appropriate courses in high school or at BCCC. They must also complete college-level Anatomy and Physiology I and II and Microbiology with a grade of C or better. These and the basic chemistry course requirement must be completed no more than five years prior to enrolling in the nursing program.¹³⁸

But Rigor Doesn’t Equal Success

Academic rigor, in this case, does not translate into academic success. Students who successfully complete BCCC’s Allied Health programs exhibit, almost without exception, similar success in the professional arena, but the number of students who complete programs (program completers) is alarmingly low. The top producer of graduates among BCCC’s Allied Health and Allied Human Services programs is nursing, which has awarded, on average, 27 Associate degrees a year for the last five academic years (from 1998-99 through 2002-03).¹³⁹ But these numbers are down significantly; the decline in the number of nursing degrees awarded represents one of BCCC’s biggest decreases in degrees awarded in the last decade-plus, falling 65 percent (from 52 degrees in 1992 to 18 in 2003).¹⁴⁰ Moreover, the nursing department graduates students at a much lower rate than it enrolls them. The department enrolls 60 to 65 nursing degree students per semester, some 50 percent to 60 percent of whom drop out during the first semester; of those remaining in the second semester, another 50 percent to 60 percent drop out.¹⁴¹ Only about 25 percent of enrollees complete the program and graduate with an Associate degree in nursing.

Same BCCC Students, Same Struggles

Two factors drive the low success rates of BCCC’s nursing candidates: their inability to complete the difficult academic work of the program, namely its requirements in math; and the same financial and family obligations that make it difficult for most BCCC students to stay in school, advance at a reasonable pace, and obtain a certificate or degree.

Hurdle No. 1: Math Skills

Nursing requires a high degree of precision and critical thinking skills. Nurses must be able to do and understand math. Even when nursing students come to BCCC’s

nursing programs with transcripts that indicate they can perform in math, in too many cases the reality is otherwise: they cannot.

Before each semester begins, new nursing students are strongly urged to attend a two-week pre-entry program, during which they review basic arithmetic skills and concentrate on improving their reading and writing. These remedial activities are designed to review basic skills and/or teach new academic skills that were never learned, so students are as academically prepared as possible on the first day of class. Two tests are administered at the beginning of this pre-entry program: an in-house math test to gauge basic arithmetic skills and the Nurse Entrance Test, which gathers baseline data on incoming students and helps faculty identify student strengths and weaknesses. Together, the tests consistently show students' reading and math skills coming up short, with many scoring below 50 percent on the basic math test, and more than half reading below college level.¹⁴²

Life Obligations and Challenges

Like many BCCC students, nursing students must also deal with the demands of family life and economic pressure that compete with their ability to attend class and study.

Although BCCC's Associate degree program in nursing is a two-year program, the Department of Nursing reports that students typically take six semesters or more to finish. According to BCCC's Health Occupations Workforce Initiative, the median time it takes nursing students to complete the program is seven years. A major reason for this is the large number of personal obligations students juggle in addition to school; most have families and jobs. While the nursing department recommends students not work at all while studying nursing, and no more than 16 hours a week if they must, most work more than 32 hours, or nearly full-time.

Similarly, the nursing department asserts that students pursuing a certificate to become licensed practical nurses, technically a one-year program, take at least four semesters to finish. According to Health Occupations Workforce Initiative data, meanwhile, the average median time it takes these students to complete the program and receive a certificate is more than eight years.

BCCC Nursing Programs' Unique Challenges

Student challenges aside, part of BCCC's own inability to successfully move more students through its nursing programs is traceable to the nursing program itself.

Limited Capacity

BCCC's ADN program accepts new students every fall and spring, and typically admits 64 students each semester, a target based on faculty capacity and historical data. In spring 2003 it enrolled 63, and in Fall 2002 it enrolled 61.¹⁴³ According to department staff, there were probably between five and 10 students who were not

admitted due to limited program slots in Fall 2002. In Spring 2003 the number of unadmitted students remained the same, but then jumped to between 20 and 25 in Fall 2003, when a total of 70 students were admitted to BCCC's ADN program.

The number of nursing students at BCCC is ultimately limited by faculty shortages and tough competition in Baltimore City for the few facilities where students can fulfill their clinical requirements.

- **Faculty:** BCCC's inability to attract and retain nursing faculty limits the number of nursing students the college can accommodate. By law, 75 percent of the nursing courses that BCCC offers must be taught by "full-time equivalents," each of whom must hold a master's degree in nursing. This requirement is met with a patchwork faculty schedule. To teach the number of students currently in BCCC's nursing programs, for example, the department needs 14 full-time faculty; one clinical faculty member for every eight students. But in spring 2003, BCCC's nursing department had only 12 full-time faculty and nine part-time faculty for 138 ADN students and 16 or 17 PN students, with at least one-third of those faculty members doing "overloads."¹⁴⁴ The department spent much of Summer 2003 scrambling to meet its full-time faculty requirements for the Fall semester.

Money is the biggest problem in recruiting faculty. Hospitals facing nursing shortages are luring nurses fresh out of ADN programs with salaries in the \$40,000s, along with perks such as tuition reimbursement and signing bonuses. Because BCCC pays faculty members who hold a master's degree only \$42,000, it struggles to compete with other employers. Adjunct nursing instructors at BCCC do make higher wages than adjunct faculty in other departments—on average, \$40 an hour in Fall 2003 vs. \$30-\$32 an hour—but even that doesn't approach what nurses can earn in the private sector.

- **Limited Clinical Sites:** Finally, intense competition for clinical space in Baltimore City forces BCCC to limit its nursing enrollment. Obstetrics and pediatric facilities, for example, are limited in number but demand for them is high; yet all nursing students must take the obstetrics/pediatrics course and its clinical rotation in order to graduate. When BCCC admits students into its nursing programs, it commits to providing all required clinical rotations. That commitment often requires difficult juggling.

Same Institution, Same Limitations

BCCC's struggle to graduate nursing students is also due to the same structural limitations and institutional weaknesses that permeate all of BCCC's academic programs.

grams—nursing plus six others—but who, given the size and popularity of nursing versus other programs, spends most of his time counseling nursing students.) This counselor develops the admissions list and forwards it to the nursing department for its review and confirmation that students are indeed qualified to enroll in nursing courses.

In reality, however, many students never see this designated counselor. Few new students at BCCC see an advisor in their first year at all, and even fewer know that there is separate protocol for choosing and preparing for a nursing major.

Moreover, nursing students go through the same orientation as all new BCCC students and take PRE 100, a first-semester one-credit course that teaches basic study, time management and life skills, but in no way prepares students for the rigor and demands of a program like nursing. The nursing department has tried unsuccessfully to create an intensive one-semester, five- or six-credit alternative to PRE 100 that takes students through developmental MAT 81 and RDG 82, lays out what it means to be a nurse, and teaches students how to read nursing textbooks and how to study.

The PN program requires that all PN students participate in tutoring during their second semester, a factor the department credits with low second-semester attrition among these students versus ADN students. But the nursing department does not have the personnel or means to expand this to all nursing students at all levels.

Leadership in Short Supply

BCCC's Allied Health and Human Services Division has had a succession of interim deans, and from Spring 2003 to Spring 2004, no dean at all. Coupled with the absence of strong, stable leadership in the academic VP position over time, the division that the college credits with its biggest success stories appears to have been rudderless for more than two years.

Staffing and student support needs of the nursing department go unmet, at the same time that under-enrolled and/or unsuccessful Allied Health and Human Services programs have continued to exist. This situation provides further evidence that broad and high-level attention to student success in this area is lacking.

To be fair, the administration is weighing several actions that would ostensibly improve success rates among BCCC's nursing students. But these options do not address the roots of the problem, a failure, which, in turn, raises questions about BCCC's ability to effect wholesale change.

A separate orientation course for pre-nursing students is still on the table, as is the expansion of obligatory tutoring program-wide in the early semesters. Both are laudable plans. But the other strategies are more Band-Aid-like in that they fail to address

VI. The Fruits of Success, The Price of Failure



The Middle States Commission on Higher Education asserted in its 2003 re-accreditation report that BCCC is “at a place in its history where it can seriously address many of the challenges it has faced and, most importantly, be the vital link and bridge between the citizens of the City of Baltimore and the new opportunities of the 21st Century.”¹⁴⁷

Yet, the words of a 1980 internal report from the college ring with a discomfoting familiarity. That far back, the college’s own faculty and staff called for “a unified program of basic skills [with] a system of accountability, authority and evaluation.” The exact same prescription applies today.

For a quarter-century, BCCC has struggled with the most basic aspect of its mission as a community college and open-access institution: the provision of basic skills or developmental education to academically underprepared students. Until the college increases its ability to provide effective remediation, BCCC will continue to see limited success in preparing students for higher education and the workplace. Meanwhile, several opportunities to implement reforms and improve outcomes for these students have surfaced in recent years, starting with the college’s reconstitution in 1992 as a State institution, culminating in the last two years with an unprecedented number of external and objective evaluations.

Yet the most significant reforms BCCC has implemented of late have lacked not only the basic infrastructure that might make them effective, but also the oversight—accountability, leadership and evaluation—to ensure their success. Absent these, current reforms will continue the way of most BCCC reforms: costly experiments that ultimately prove ineffective.

Meanwhile, millions will continue to pay the price of failure: federal, Maryland and Baltimore City taxpayers, who fund 70 percent of BCCC’s \$76 million budget to keep BCCC’s doors open; Baltimore City, whose future depends, more than anything else, on an educated workforce; and, most importantly, thousands of under-educated and low-income individuals with children and families for whom BCCC represents the only chance at a better, financially stable future.

VII. New Leadership at the Top: Giving Students the Future They Deserve



BCCC has attempted numerous reforms in recent years. That these efforts have been met with nominal success, however, points to weak leadership, as illustrated in this report's analysis of BCCC's long-term strategic planning and its day-in-and-day-out operations.

What this report also attempts to show is that leadership must emanate from the top—the top including not only the college's President and his administration, but more importantly, BCCC's Board of Trustees. To once again quote State statute: BCCC's board must “exercise general control and management of the College and establish policies to effect the efficient operation of the College, [and] appoint a President of the College who shall be the Chief Executive Officer of the College and the Chief of Staff for the Board of Trustees.”

BCCC's board has struggled to fulfill this mandate in the last two years. It has been hands-off and largely absent on matters that most affect the college's mission “to educate and train a world-class workforce for Baltimore.” It has been inconsistent in its public show of support for those charged with running BCCC, as well as its public demands for accountability. Major administrative upheavals and academic crises have occurred on its watch, calling into question its ability to – as stipulated by State statute – control, manage and efficiently operate the institution. In times of turmoil and crisis the board has failed to act as the public face of the college and instill confidence in outsiders that BCCC can and will emerge strong from difficult times. Its decisions at times have been driven more by politics than the best interests of BCCC students. The list of shortcomings continues. But high in importance among them is that the BCCC Board of Trustees has failed to publicly and visibly respond with outrage to the bleak picture of student performance that has persisted at the college over the years. Despite the huge opportunities posed by a new president and numerous internal and external evaluations throughout 2002 and 2003, BCCC's board has not taken aggressive steps to effect meaningful change. In short, it has failed to put BCCC's students first.

If BCCC is to fully serve its students and Baltimore City, the college requires a bolder, stronger, more committed Board. It is the recommendation of this report, which summarizes two years of collaboration between The Abell Foundation and the college, that Maryland's governor strongly consider reconstituting BCCC's Board of Trustees. A reconstituted Board should represent the necessary skills and experience to ensure sound management of the institution and commitment to change, as well as a solid understanding of both K-12 and higher education. As part of this recommendation, the Governor might also consider decreasing the length of the renewable six-year term that BCCC board members currently serve.

Just as important as a new board at BCCC is the oversight of that board—something that to date has been relatively non-existent. Not only is BCCC’s Board of Trustees more independent than most higher education boards in the State, but as a virtual State agency that depends more heavily than its fellow Maryland community colleges on state coffers, an additional layer of accountability at the state level might be beneficial. As noted in this report, the Maryland Higher Education Commission is limited in the authority it can exercise over the institutions it oversees. As a result, this report further recommends that the State designate an additional level of accountability to BCCC, higher than, and external to the Board.

Some preliminary means for achieving such accountability include:

- Appointing ex-officio members to the BCCC Board; for example, the secretary of higher education and the lieutenant governor, the Governor’s point person for higher education. Such appointments would, for the first time, provide a direct linkage between BCCC and Annapolis—and a critical one, given the institution’s structural and funding ties to the state.
- Appealing to the Blue Ribbon Panel on Higher Education announced by the Governor and MHEC in April 2004 to include in its examination of future higher education needs in Maryland a review of BCCC. Led by the Acting Secretary of Higher Education, Dr. Calvin Burnett, the panel’s mission is to “ensure that college remains accessible and affordable for all Marylanders” through scrutiny of “enrollment trends, the cost of education, workforce issues and cost efficiencies” according to the April 23, 2004 MHEC press release announcing the panel’s creation. The work of this “special State Planning Committee” is slated to culminate in a report to the Governor in Fall 2004, and expected to help shape the State Plan for Post Secondary Education due out later this year.
- Commencing a dialogue between the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, MHEC officials, and state budget leaders about the State’s investment in BCCC, and how it can best ensure a return on that investment. Such a discussion would be a first step toward collaboration among external constituencies of the college critical to its reform.

These recommendations—and this report—come after a three-year initiative by the Abell Foundation to collaborate closely with BCCC, in an effort to contribute to the successes of the college and its students. It is the firm conviction of The Abell Foundation that BCCC is positioned to play a critical role in the future workforce of Baltimore City. It is also in this spirit that The Foundation makes the above recommendations—in its view, the next steps toward fulfilling BCCC’s considerable and, as of yet, unrealized promise.

Endnotes

- ¹ Linthicum, 1979 (Maryland State Board of Community Colleges)
- ² A Study of Remedial/Developmental Education at the Community College of Baltimore, Funded by the Abell Foundation and Researched by CCB, Sept. 15, 1989
- ³ Blueprint for Quality: Final Report of the Committee on the Future of Maryland Community Colleges, Maryland State Board for Community Colleges, 1986
- ⁴ A Study of Remedial/Developmental Education at the Community College of Baltimore, Funded by The Abell Foundation and Researched by CCB, Sept. 15, 1989
- ⁵ First enacted as part of the Higher Education Act (HEA) in 1965, Title III (Institutional Aid) authorizes grants to higher education institutions to strengthen academic quality, institutional management and financial stability; administered by the U.S. Department of Education, Title III programs help institutions expand educational opportunities for low-income and minority students.
- ⁶ 2003 Performance Accountability Report, Maryland Public Colleges and Universities, Volume II, Maryland Higher Education Commission
- ⁷ BCCC, Office of Institutional Research and Planning
- ⁸ Baltimore City Community College Middle States Self-Study, January 2003
- ⁹ Report to the Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students of Baltimore City Community College, Middle States Commission on Higher Education, prepared following BCCC visit, March 30-April 2, 2003
- ¹⁰ Baltimore City Community College Review, April-June 2003, James L. Fisher, Ltd.
- ¹¹ <http://www.bccc.edu>
- ¹² BCCC, Office of Institutional Research and Planning
- ¹³ 2003 Data Book, Maryland Association of Community Colleges, "Annual Percent Change in Full-Time and Part-Time Credit Students by College," Maryland Community Colleges, Fall 2001-2003
- ¹⁴ 2003 Performance Accountability Report, Maryland Public Colleges and Universities, Volume II, Maryland Higher Education Commission
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- ²⁰ Baltimore City Community College at the Crossroads: How Remedial Education and Other Impediments to Graduation Are Affecting the Mission of the College, The Abell Foundation, March 2002
- ²¹ BCCC, Office of Institutional Research and Planning; 2002 Data Book, BCCC
- ²² BCCC, Office of Institutional Research and Planning
- ²³ Trend Book March 2003, Maryland Higher Education Commission
- ²⁴ BCCC, Office of Institutional Research and Planning
- ²⁵ (<http://www.bccc.edu>) MAT 80 Arithmetic: Concepts and Applications (0 credits); MAT 81 Elementary Algebra (0 credits); MAT 82 Intermediate Algebra (0 credits)
- ²⁶ (<http://www.bccc.edu>) RDG 80 Intensive Support Program in Reading (0 credits); RDG 81 Reading Skills I (0 credits); RDG 82 Reading Skills II (0 credits)
- ²⁷ (<http://www.bccc.edu>) ENG 80 Intensive Support Program in Writing (0 credits); ENG 81 Composition Skills I (0 credits); ENG 82 Composition Skills II (0 credits)
- ²⁸ BCCC 2003 Data Book
- ²⁹ (Email) From: McKay, Sylvester E., Sent: Tuesday, November 04, 2003 12:08 PM, To: BCCC Community, Subject: SEC Questionnaire
- ³⁰ Trend Book March 2003, Maryland Higher Education Commission
- ³¹ Middle States Commission on Higher Education, <http://www.msache.org>
- ³² Chair's Brief to the Commission on Higher Education, Confidential Recommendations of The Visiting Team to Baltimore City Community College, Baltimore, Maryland, Visit: March 30-April 2, 2003
- ³³ <http://www.aacc.cc.md.us/newsgeneral.HTML>
- ³⁴ <http://www.mdarchives.state.md.us/msa/mdmanual/25univ/bccc/html/msa14080.html>
- ³⁵ Annotated Code of Maryland, Md. EDUCATION Code Ann. § 16-504 (2002) § 16-504. Board of Trustees

- ³⁶ Baltimore City College Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes (Revised). Thursday, December 18, 2003
- ³⁷ (Email) From: McKay, Sylvester E., Sent: Tuesday, November 04, 2003 12:08 PM, To: BCCC Community, Subject: SEC Questionnaire
- ³⁸ (Email) Memorandum To: BCCC Community, From: Sylvester E. McKay, Ph.D. President, Date: May 12, 2003, Re: Vice President, Academic Affairs
- ³⁹ BCCC [Board of Trustees] Agenda Attachment, Confirmation of Personnel Actions, Oct. 16, 2003 . . . The Baltimore Sun, October 8, 2003 Wednesday FINAL Edition, "BCCC dismisses at least 6 officials; Firings are part of plan to overhaul the college, president's assistant says," by Alec MacGillis
- ⁴⁰ <http://www.aaup.org/Com-a/devcen.htm>
- ⁴¹ Report to the Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students of Baltimore City Community College, Middle States Commission on Higher Education, prepared following BCCC visit, March 30-April 2, 2003
- ⁴² BCCC Board of Trustees Meeting, Approved Minutes, April 17, 2003
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- ⁴⁵ http://mlis.state.md.us/2003rs/budget_docs/All/Operating/R95C00_Baltimore_City_Community_College.pdf
- ⁴⁶ BCCC's Longtime Challenge: College Level Math Standards, The Abell Foundation, May 2002
- ⁴⁷ Set Up To Fail: The First-Year Experience at BCCC, The Abell Foundation, January 2003
- ⁴⁸ Draft, BCCC Priorities, Nov. 26, 2002, by the Abell Foundation for BCCC
- ⁴⁹ Confidential Chair's Brief to the Commission on Higher Education, prepared by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education following its BCCC visit, March 30-April 2, 2003
- ⁵⁰ Report to the Faculty, Administration, Trustees, Students of Baltimore City Community College, Middle States Commission on Higher Education, prepared following BCCC visit, March 30-April 2, 2003 Confidential Chair's Brief to the Commission on Higher Education, Confidential Recommendations of The Visiting Team to Baltimore City Community College, Baltimore, Maryland, Visit: March 30-April 2, 2003
- ⁵¹ Baltimore City Community College Review, April-June 2003, James L. Fisher, Ltd.
- ⁵² (Email) From: McKay, Sylvester E., Sent: Tuesday, November 04, 2003 12:08 PM, To: BCCC Community, Subject: SEC Questionnaire
- ⁵³ Handout at BCCC Board of Trustees Meeting, March 21, 2002; see also Baltimore City Community College Middle States Self-Study, January 2003
- ⁵⁴ Statement of Concerns And Request for Intervention to The Board of Trustees of Baltimore City Community College, The Faculty Senate, BCCC, October 3, 2003
- ⁵⁵ Board of Trustees Open Session Agenda, March 18, 2004
- ⁵⁶ BCCC Board of Trustees Meeting, Approved Minutes, Retreat May 15 and 16, 2003
- ⁵⁷ The Baltimore Sun, August 28, 2003, "Effort to improve program at BCCC gets mixed reviews; Rule on specific degrees disqualifies some from teaching remedial classes," by Alec MacGillis
- ⁵⁸ (Email) From: Sarah Garrett Sent: Thursday, August 07, 2003 4:55 PM Subject: MEETING TO DISCUSS IMPLEMENTATION OF DEVELOPMENTAL ENG/RDG COMBINATION COURSES FOR FALL 2003 To: Leslie Hyland (E-mail) ; 'lilymaeve@earthlink.net' ; 'Achenoweth@bcps.k12.md.us'; Stan Brown; Carole Quine; Andre J. Williams; Kathleen Styles; Ronald Smith; Beverly Arah; Bernadette Green; Johanna Bagg; Scheherazade Forman; McCarrroll Nole; Marlene Downs; Sarah Garrett Cc: Sylvester E McKay; Elizabeth Johns; John Solomon; Carol Taylor; Valerie Leverette-Bey; Sarah Garrett
- ⁵⁹ BCCC Board of Trustees Meeting, Approved Minutes, Retreat May 15 and 16, 2003
- ⁶⁰ Presentation, "Faculty Planning Day, May 29,2003, An Academic Master Plan," Stan D. Brown, Assistant to the Vice President for Academic Affairs
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- ⁶⁴ Baltimore Business Journal, Feb. 17, 2003, "BCCC moves into health care training," by Scott Graham

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- 66 Baltimore City Community College Middle States Self-Study, January 2003
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- 69 (Email) From: Chikao Tsubaki, Sent: Monday, February 10, 2003 12:49 PM, To: Sarah Garrett, Cc: Rose Monroe, Carol Taylor, Chikao Tsubaki, Subject: RE: Academic Systems IE update
- 70 Proposed Implementation Plan for Baltimore City Community College, October 14, 2002, Academic Systems
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- 72 Baltimore City Community College Mathematics Department Status Report, Academic Systems Pilot Spring 2003, Final Report
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- 74 (Email) From: Bentley, James, Sent: Tuesday, October 01, 2002 5:28 PM, To: Bentley, James; Willis, Ursula; Chenoweth, Arthur, Subject: RE: Follow-up to Academic Systems Meeting on 9/26
- 75 (Email) From: Kirkman, Joseph, Sent: Tuesday, January 28, 2003 3:26 PM, To: Chenoweth, Arthur, Cc: Jones, Cassandra W.; Smolarz, Mark D.; Burkhardt, Gregory; Bentley, James; Yakimowski, Mary, Subject: Re: Earlier Emails
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- 77 Draft Proposal for a BCCC Developmental Studies Division—The BCCC Center for Learning Programs Division
- 78 “Baseline Data for the New Division of Learning Programs at BCCC,” by the Abell Foundation
- 79 “Baltimore City Community College, Abell Report Recommendations” (document from Dec. 12, 2003 meeting between BCCC and the Abell Foundation)
- 80 Set Up To Fail? The First Year Student Experience at BCCC, The Abell Foundation, January 2003
- 81 BCCC Agenda Attachment, December 18, 2003; Confirmation of Personnel Actions, p. 3
- 82 Set Up To Fail: The First-Year Student Experience at BCCC, The Abell Foundation, January 2003
- 83 BCCC Board of Trustees Meeting, Approved Minutes, Retreat May 15 and 16, 2003
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- 86 “Baltimore City Community College, Abell Report Recommendations” (document from Dec. 12, 2003 meeting between BCCC and the Abell Foundation)
- 87 Draft Proposal for a BCCC Developmental Studies Division—The BCCC Center for Learning Programs Division
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- 89 Gaps for Fall 2003 represent data omitted due to higher percentages of incompletes
- 90 Gaps for Fall 2003 are due to the merger that semester of developmental reading with developmental English
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- 94 (Email) From: McKay, Sylvester E. Sent: Saturday, April 03, 2004 2:25 PM To: Bondima, Michelle; Brown, Stan; Finucci, Joan Cc: Garrett, Sarah; Math, Engineering & Computer Science Department; Math, Engineering and Comp. Sci. Dept. Adjuncts; English Department; Developmental English Adjunct Faculty; ESFLAM Department Adjuncts; Natural & Physical Sciences Department; Natural and Physical Sciences Dept. Adjuncts; Social & Behavioral Sci. Dept. Adjuncts; Social & Behavioral Sciences Subject: RE: Academic Master Plan
- 95 Board of Trustees Open Session Agenda, February 19, 2004
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- ¹⁰⁹ Letter to Dr. Rusty Stephens, VP, Academic and Student Affairs, Harford Community College, from Dr. John A. Sabatini, Jr., Assistant Secretary, Maryland Higher Education Commission, Sept. 26, 2002
- ¹¹⁰ Preliminary Recommendations Based on the Survey of Programs' Satisfaction with Mathematics Requirements, Subcommittee on Curriculum, Placement and Delivery, Ad Hoc Committee on Reform of Developmental Education, Feb. 6, 2003
- ¹¹¹ Report of the Middle States Accreditation Team Visit to Baltimore City Community College, March 30-April 2, 2003
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- ¹¹⁴ "Baltimore City Community College, Abell Report Recommendations" (document from Dec. 12, 2003 meeting between BCCC and the Abell Foundation)
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- ¹¹⁷ (Email) From: McKay, Sylvester E., Sent: Tuesday, November 04, 2003 12:08 PM, To: BCCC Community, Subject: SEC Questionnaire
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- ¹³⁰ BCCC Board of Trustees Open Session Agenda, March 18, 2004, Personnel Actions; (Email) From: Carol Skye carolskye2@yahoo.com Date: Fri Mar 26, 2004 9:16:32 PM US/Eastern To: jbigel@verizon.net, laurosa@earthlink.net Cc: jbigelow@afscmecouncil92.org Subject: fyi
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Notes