

# The Abell Report

*What we think about, and what we'd like you to think about*

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## Baltimore City Community College: A Long Way To Go Two Years Yield Few Meaningful Reforms, Underscore Deep-Seated Challenges Facing Baltimore City Residents' Largest Provider of Post-Secondary Education

### ABELL SALUTES: "BEST"—Increasing educational opportunities for disadvantaged African American students

In the mid-1970s shockwaves from the *Brown v Board* decision were resonating throughout Baltimore's education community, presenting the leadership with a dilemma: Though the public schools were becoming more integrated under the law, the private schools were not subject to the law and, at that point in time, remained what they had traditionally been—all white. Five Baltimore private school educators viewed the situation as unacceptable; they decided to right what they saw as a wrong, and to recruit disadvantaged Afro-American students and work towards integrating their enrollments. The problem was—how would the students be recruited and who would pay the costs? And so in 1987, out of the mergers of earlier initiatives established to deal with the problem, BEST (Baltimore Educational Scholarship Trust) was born.

The mission of BEST was set out clearly from the start: "to encourage, support and increase the educational opportunities for academically talented, economically disadvantaged African American students from the Baltimore metropolitan area." Now in its 17th year, BEST has created a record that makes clear just how faithfully the Trust has been fulfilling its

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### I. Introduction

Baltimore City Community College (BCCC) is the only chance for many Baltimore City residents to obtain a post-secondary education, find a job with a career path, and earn a sufficient income to support a family. BCCC is also a critical linchpin in Baltimore's ability to build a competitive workforce. Yet Baltimore's largest provider of post-secondary education (with 7,300 credit students) has generally graduated 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. Of those students who do make it through and advance 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. As a result, only one-fourth of students who enroll in nursing each year ever complete the program.

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 in 1990. 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 true State oversight, a situation that has been particularly apparent in the last two years during BCCC's unsuccessful attempts at reform. These failures to strengthen BCCC have, in turn, severely limited the returns on taxpayers' substantial investment in the institution.

Given both the sizable stakes of a successful BCCC and the college's inability to fulfill its potential, this report concludes that significant changes are required at BCCC, starting with a reconfiguration of its Board of Trustees. On May 27, 2004 President McKay resigned; in the wake of his resignation, the time is right.

### Background

With a sizable influx of public dollars earmarked for employment training and post-secondary education and an overall annual student enrollment topping 20,000, BCCC is positioned as a critical player in local workforce development. That it boasts 37 percent of the City's college-bound public high school graduates also makes it the most indispensable post-secondary institution in Baltimore City.<sup>1</sup>

But at BCCC over the years, low graduation rates have continued to decline through 2003. The former BCCC President reported a significant increase of 514 graduates in 2004 (*The Baltimore Sun*, May 25, 2004), but this number has not

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been officially documented. This juxtaposition of substantial promise and meager success propelled The Abell Foundation to publish a 2002 report, *Baltimore City Community College at the Crossroads: How Remedial Education and Other Impediments to Graduation Are Affecting the Mission of the College*. The report documented low rates of student success and identified barriers that prevent students from obtaining certificates or degrees and transferring to four-year colleges. Based on these findings it recommended that BCCC review its mission; overhaul its developmental studies program, particularly in math; strengthen student supports; and bridge the gap to Baltimore City's public schools. To help ensure that the college had the tools to launch such reforms, The Abell Foundation hired a consultant to provide full-time research support to BCCC from March 2002 through December 2003.

This report concludes the consultant's work at BCCC. Using two years' worth of qualitative and quantitative data, it outlines changes that have occurred at the college since 2001, discusses to what extent reforms are taking root, and assesses the impact of these on students and the college's operations overall. More importantly, it strives to help shape BCCC as a true force for higher education and employment in the City's future.

It appears that since the resignation of BCCC's president, others have also seized that goal. State higher education officials have begun looking into issues pertaining to leadership and accountability at the college. On May 30, a *Baltimore Sun* editorial denounced the lack of oversight at the college and called for a new Board and greater State accountability.

## II. BCCC Today

Reflecting State and national trends, a majority of BCCC's credit students are female (74 percent), attend college part-

### Percentage of BCCC Students Who Passed Developmental Courses by Level, Fall 1998 and Fall 2002; Five-Year Trend, Fall 1998 – Fall 2002<sup>10</sup>

Semester Course Number*	Mathematics <sup>11</sup>			Reading <sup>12</sup>			English <sup>13</sup>		
	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%

time (67 percent) and work while in school (72 percent; 44 percent full-time).<sup>2,3</sup> With respect to other student and enrollment trends across Maryland's 16 community colleges, however, BCCC diverges from the norm. It has the largest concentration of African American students—81 percent. Students in career programs at BCCC far outnumber those in transfer programs (62 percent versus 22 percent in Fall 2003);<sup>4</sup> by comparison, transfer students outnumbered career students statewide in Fall 2002 (45 percent versus 34 percent). Finally, while career programs in health services 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.<sup>5</sup>

#### How BCCC Students Are Faring

During the first half of the 1990s, BCCC awarded an average of 400 Associate degrees and 80 certificates. While certificates have held steady, the number of degrees fell dramatically from 442 in 1994-95 to 257 in 1998-99 (42 percent in four years), and remained at that level through 2003: BCCC awarded 261 Associate degrees in 1999-2000; 260 in 2000-01; 262 in 2001-02; and 261 in 2002-03.<sup>6</sup>

As evidenced by rising remedial needs of incoming students, BCCC is serving the State's most unprepared college population. In Fall 1993, 84 percent of entering BCCC students required remediation in at least one subject—

reading, English or math—based on placement test scores.<sup>7</sup> By Fall 2002, nearly a decade later, 94 percent of first-time BCCC students required remediation.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, the actual amount of remediation required by students has also increased. In Fall 1999, 61 percent of entering students required remediation in all three areas—reading, English and math; by Fall 2002 that number had reached 67 percent. Specifically, 92 percent required remediation in math; 73 percent required remediation in reading and 78 percent required remediation in English. By comparison, 32 percent of Maryland community college students require remediation in reading, 34 percent require remediation in English, and 52 percent require remediation in math, according to the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC).<sup>9</sup>

On a positive note, pass rates for developmental courses at BCCC have increased in reading, English and math during the last five years, from Fall 1998 through Fall 2002. Albeit inconsistent, these increases are encouraging—particularly in the area of math. (As of Spring 2004, when BCCC released the 2003 Data Book, its most recent, data reflecting pass rates for Fall 2003 were incomplete, and thus not used.)

Despite these improvements since 1998, the overall success rate of developmental students at BCCC remains discouraging. According to the administration, 460 students repeated the same developmental course for the third, fourth or fifth time in Fall 2003.<sup>14</sup> By contrast, 84 percent of community college students

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statewide pass their first developmental math and English courses, according to MHEC.<sup>15</sup>

### **III. The Last Two Years: A Series of Stunted Reforms**

Internal administrative shifts, external evaluations, and public attention resulting from both have collectively laid the foundation for significant changes at BCCC during the last two years. Every 10 years the Middle States Commission on Higher Education extends accreditation to post-secondary institutions. In May 2003 Middle States conditionally-renewed BCCC's accreditation with 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.<sup>16</sup> The June 2002 retirement of BCCC's president of 12 years, Dr. James Tschechtelin, also spurred prospects for change. His successor, Dr. Sylvester McKay, had led another community college, College of the Albemarle in North Carolina, and arrived with a reform-minded agenda.

During this time, The Abell Foundation, Middle States Commission, and others worked closely with BCCC to create strategic frameworks for change. BCCC, in turn, implemented some significant reforms. The developmental reform initiatives BCCC has launched since early 2002, however, have been plagued by poor implementation. Ranging from the absence of a strategic plan to guide the various reforms to a dearth of best practices- and data-based decisions driving them, numerous factors have impeded BCCC's three most significant reform initiatives, and limited their potential to increase student success rates at the college: The Committee for Reforming Developmental Education, Academic Systems Curricula, and the New Developmental Studies Division.

#### **1. The Ad Hoc Committee: A Year "On Hold"**

Following the March 2002 Abell

report BCCC launched, under its new Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. Jerome Atkins, the Ad Hoc Committee on Reform of Developmental Education. Its charge, as presented to BCCC's Board of Trustees, 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."<sup>17</sup> Meanwhile, the Ad Hoc Committee was held up by BCCC as a strategic blueprint among potential partners, and hailed during its 10-year accreditation process as a force likely to "have an impact on the course of developmental education at BCCC."<sup>18</sup>

But within less than a year of its April 2002 launch, the committee and its work collapsed. The steering committee that was to lead it never materialized, and its subcommittees produced little overall. By early 2003 the committee as a whole ceased to exist without any explanation.

It was not until the Ad Hoc Committee was falling apart that its activities appeared on the Board of Trustees' radar—briefly in April 2003. The following month Dr. Atkins left the college, and the committee was not mentioned again among BCCC's leaders. There were no signs of accountability or oversight during its existence, and two years later, there is nothing to show for its work. These absences are troubling, given the huge import the Ad Hoc Committee was ascribed publicly by BCCC as a means for reforming the institution.

#### **2. Academic Systems: A Pilot Program Without A Navigator**

The adoption of curricula/software produced by Academic Systems Corporation has been BCCC's highest-profile, and perhaps costliest, developmental reform of late. According to college purchase orders, BCCC bought \$699,060 worth of software, online course materials, and textbooks from Academic Systems during Summer 2003 and Fall 2003.

BCCC decided to pilot Academic Systems' online math and English curricula in Summer 2002. The plan was ambitious: to have a "full-scale implementa-

tion" underway by July 2003, "involving students, faculty and facilitators at BCCC and all BCPSS high schools," according to pilot proposals. The Abell Foundation, which contributed \$28,000 to the pilot, had called in its March 2002 report for alternative modes of developmental instruction—a strategy supported by best-practices research and BCCC's own experimentation with self-paced and developmental courses online. Meanwhile, data from community colleges using Academic Systems suggested that the software improved developmental pass rates among at-risk students nationwide. In November 2002 a BCCC study team visited Cuyahoga Community College in Cleveland, Ohio to observe just how these gains were achieved.

But BCCC did not make use of these experiences and research in devising an Academic Systems implementation model that met the specific needs of its students. Details were still being hashed out in July 2002, halfway through the first pilot phase, and participating BCCC students did not access the software until five or six weeks into the eight-week summer session.

Meanwhile, BCCC's pilot goals were vague and shifting, and implementation for Fall 2002 followed no approved plan. The English curriculum was added at the last minute, creating confusion among students about course requirements and frustration about already-purchased traditional course textbooks. The Spring 2003 phase of the pilot suffered from similar setbacks; students did not have access to tutorial software and textbooks 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.<sup>19</sup> English instructors did not follow a single protocol for monitoring student work and grading papers, further compromising the evaluation of student progress.

Perhaps most representative of the problems plaguing the pilot was the Baltimore City Public School System's decision to halt a partnership between its high schools and BCCC. BCPSS' Chief Technology Officer described the pilot as "another half-baked instructional intervention." He asserted that "any new initiatives

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in this area should be well thought out with real curricular goals, well designed evaluations, well thought through implementation, training and technical support plans, etc., none of which are currently in evidence on this initiative.”<sup>20</sup>

Finally, the pilot lacked accountability and consistent leadership. It did not include steps that Academic Systems maintained were critical to success, namely an evaluation plan and the hiring of a program coordinator. Throughout the pilot it was never clear who was in charge, and at no point did necessary leadership come from the top, despite the former president’s assertion that computerized instruction was the future of BCCC’s developmental instruction.

Not surprisingly, the goals of the pilot went largely unmet. Low levels of course completion among students and the lack of any uniform protocol among instructors prevented pilot data from shedding light on the potential for increased student learning and retention. Yet in May 2003, BCCC adopted Academic Systems for all developmental instruction, a decision that would cost BCCC \$700,000 in its first semester.

### 3. BCCC’s New Developmental Studies Division: A Rushed Start

Of the reforms BCCC has launched in the last two years, the creation of a new, separate developmental studies division—the Center for Learning Programs—has been the most sweeping. So incomplete was its launch, however, 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.

According to BCCC’s July 2003 draft proposal, the new developmental studies 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 responsive-

**Percentage of BCCC Students Who Passed Developmental Courses by Level, Fall 2003<sup>23</sup>**

Semester Course Number	Mathematics <sup>24</sup>			Reading <sup>25</sup>			English		
	80	81	82	80	81	82	80	81	82
Fall 2002	40%	36%	46%	69%	60%	61%	59%	64%	56%
Fall 2003 (Data Book)	48%	--	--	--	--	--	63%	65%	64%
Fall 2003 (Board of Trustees)	53%	62%	71%	--	--	--	63%	65%	64%
% Increase from Fall 2002 to Fall 2003	66%	100%	73%	--	--	--	7%	2%	14%

ness to community needs.<sup>21</sup> The proposal also included broad goals, objectives, and expected outcomes for the division; deadlines and responsible parties for each action; and promises for a new dean and new faculty team specially trained in developmental instruction.

But by the time the division was launched, none of these critical components were in place and deadlines went unmet. No benchmarks for measuring first-semester student progress were ever set. A new dean was never hired, and when at the end of the Fall 2003 semester one finally was, BCCC’s Board of Trustees overruled her appointment.<sup>22</sup> Among the many new contractual hires for the new division, few had any formal training in developmental education, and many did not have a master’s degree in the field in which he or she was teaching—a requirement of a questionable credentialing policy BCCC adopted in Spring 2003. Meanwhile, the only training developmental faculty received was a cursory workshop in Academic Systems a week before classes began.

Finally, 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 chaotic, and it was mid-October before major problems were resolved. Most notably, full-scale implementation of Academic Systems software for all developmental courses, the cornerstone of the new division, took place without the necessary infrastructure (technological hardware, trained instructors and written syllabi) to support it, resulting in several lost weeks of learning for students.

While some of the problems that plagued the new division’s launch have since been resolved, many persisted into the Spring 2004 semester. The division still lacked a leader. Numerous instructors were still ill-qualified to teach developmental studies. 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; nor were instructors following uniform guidelines when it came to testing, grading and generally evaluating student performance. Most importantly, there was no division-wide final assessment in place that would indicate if developmental students were making academic progress as a result of these reforms.

### Results of Reforms: Student Performance Data Inconclusive

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

BCCC officials attribute the sudden and significant jumps in developmental math pass rates (of up to 100 percent) for Fall 2003 to recent reforms it has implemented. But a number of factors make it difficult to determine to what extent, if

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any, these numbers actually represent increases in student learning, and thus authentic progress.

- The above discrepancies among data released for Fall 2003 raise questions: 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? Faculty assert that these March 2004 pass rates also include students who took a "second-chance" makeup course over the winter. If true, this would invalidate these data for any study of effectiveness of reforms during the Fall semester.
- Developmental math instructors used different curricula and instructional methods during Fall 2003 and subsequent makeup courses; in some cases, faculty assert, makeup course instructors did not even use Academic Systems.
- 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. Yet, it is not clear that improved student performance is required to pass a BCCC developmental course. At the College of Southern Maryland, by contrast, a final exam is also administered to all developmental math students. There is no comparable measure at BCCC. "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?"

This evidence of the poor implementation of Academic Systems and the Center for Learning Programs during the Fall 2003 semester is inconsistent with

BCCC's results showing up to 100 percent increases in pass rates in one semester and deserves inquiry.

### **Final Analysis: Poor Implementation Boiled Down to Leadership Basics**

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

The Ad Hoc Committee, Academic Systems and the Center For Learning Programs were all reforms that had merit. What they lacked were strategies to ensure their success, which, arguably, should have been present with the oversight of committed leadership. But documented findings and observations, as presented in the full May 25 report, can leave little doubt among the most fair-minded that BCCC's leadership of the last two years appeared to be marked by poor communication and non-inclusive decision-making. Ultimately, these shortcomings led to the lack of coherence and accountability that has marked each of BCCC's recent major reform efforts.

The institutional evaluation that accompanied the Middle States' re-accreditation of BCCC in May 2003 cites the following concern 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 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.*

— Middle States Commission,  
May 2003

Yet in the months that followed the Middle States report, BCCC's administration acted in ways that highlighted its authors' concerns regarding leadership at BCCC.

The administration's announcement in May 2003 that it would launch a new developmental division in academic year 2003-04 lacked specifics, and planning for the division took place during late summer by a select few. As a result, most employees left for the summer and learned of major changes only upon their return in the fall. The start of the Fall 2003 semester was marked by a very public dispute between BCCC's faculty and President McKay, in which faculty asserted that there had been "poor communication of the processes by which decisions are being made," and the President responded with criticisms of the college, faculty and staff.<sup>26</sup>

Such examples of lackluster communication have not been confined to the recent reform initiatives; nor, evidence suggests, have they abated in the wake of public reports and recommendations. Similarly suggested is a leadership style among BCCC officials that appears reluctant to do the hard work that true reform and change entail.

President McKay publicly announced last fall that by January 2004 he would release a draft of the plan mandated in the Middle States evaluation that previous spring. The plan discussed at a faculty meeting and planning session on January 23 was instead a 45-slide PowerPoint presentation that listed existing and projected course offerings—hardly the "clearly defined Academic Master Plan that specifically addresses the issue of remediation and the areas for academic program development as well as program review" mandated by Middle States as part of its reaccreditation.<sup>27</sup> When a senior faculty member proposed improving the process for devising the academic master plan, President McKay responded by saying he did not "have the flexibility of time to start over."<sup>28</sup>

Time and again, college officials have missed deadlines with no or insufficient explanation provided, and 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 the college submits to the State Department of

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Budget and Management each summer, the annual Performance Accountability Reports submitted to MHEC, and the Self-Study submitted to the Middle States Commission in early 2003.

#### *Leadership on BCCC's Board Is*

#### *Also Inconsistent*

While daily leadership of BCCC appears inconsistent, such behavior is also reflected in the actions of BCCC's Board of Trustees. The nine-member body focuses on isolated detail versus global issues and critical oversight on the one hand, and usurps the President's authority on the other.

The Board meets in 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. Until Fall 2003, for example, there had been no mention during public meetings of the launch of a new developmental studies division slated for September 2003. Meanwhile, the first detailed public report to the Board on the new division did not take place until February 2004, well after it was launched.<sup>29</sup> 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.<sup>30</sup> "Students, staff and faculty expressed concern over the current lack of accountability."

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 spouses of other Baltimore-area college presidents. At the same meet-

ing 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, and unanimously adopted a new policy regarding delegation of authority that only allows the President to "recommend" ranking individuals for hire.

## **IV. New Leadership at the Top: Giving Students the Future They Deserve**

This report's analysis of BCCC's long-term strategic direction and its daily operations points to weak leadership at the college - not only at the president's level, but more critically, emanating from BCCC's Board of Trustees. To 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 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 management of those charged with running BCCC, as well as it public demands for accountability. In times of turmoil and crisis it has failed to instill confidence in outsiders that BCCC can and will overcome difficult times. Its decisions at times appear to have been driven more by politics than the best interests of BCCC students. High in importance among recent shortcomings 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. 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 knowledgeable Board of Trustees. It is the recommendation of this report that Maryland's governor strongly consider replacing BCCC's

Board with one whose members represent the necessary skills and experience, most notably a solid understanding of K-12 and higher education and workforce development, to ensure sound management of the institution.

Just as critical as a new board at BCCC is the oversight of that board—something that to date has been relatively non-existent. As a virtual State agency, BCCC would benefit from an additional layer of accountability at the state level. Given that MHEC is limited in the authority it can presently exercise over Maryland's colleges and universities, this report further recommends that the State designate an external level of accountability for BCCC's Board. Some preliminary means for achieving such accountability include:

- appointing ex-officio members to the BCCC Board;
- requesting that the Blue Ribbon Panel on Higher Education (announced by the Governor and MHEC in April 2004) place considerable focus on BCCC in its examination of higher education needs in Maryland; and
- commencing a dialogue among the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, the Mayor, MHEC officials, and state budget leaders about the State's investment in BCCC, and how it can best ensure a return on taxpayers' investment.

These recommendations—and this report—follow a three-year initiative by The Abell Foundation to collaborate with BCCC, in an effort to contribute to the successes of BCCC and its students. The Abell Foundation remains firmly convinced that BCCC is positioned to play a critical role in the future workforce of Baltimore City. It is 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.

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## Afterword

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 leadership the status of the College and its current challenges – in the hope that in airing them, we can assist in solving them.

Earlier Abell Reports of BCCC can be found on [www.abell.org](http://www.abell.org), see publications:

### **Baltimore City Community College:**

#### **A Long Way To Go**

**May 25, 2004** – Abell Foundation study critical of academic progress at BCCC.

#### **Set Up to Fail?: The First Year Student Experience at BCCC**

**January 30, 2003** – Findings from interviews with Baltimore City high school graduates attending Baltimore City Community College reveal a transition fraught with obstacles to success.

#### **Baltimore City Community College at the Crossroads**

**March 1, 2002** – How Remedial Education and Other Impediments to Graduation Are Affecting the Mission of the College.

## Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> *2003 Performance Accountability Report, Maryland Public Colleges and Universities, Volume II*, Maryland Higher Education Commission
- <sup>2</sup> *2003 Performance Accountability Report, Maryland Public Colleges and Universities, Volume II*, Maryland Higher Education Commission
- <sup>3</sup> *2003 Data Book*, Maryland Association of Community Colleges, “Full-Time and Part-Time Credit Students by College,” Maryland Community Colleges, Fall 2001-2003
- <sup>4</sup> *2003 Data Book*, Maryland Association of Community Colleges
- <sup>5</sup> *2003 Data Book*, Maryland Association of Community Colleges
- <sup>6</sup> BCCC 2003 Data Book
- <sup>7</sup> *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
- <sup>8</sup> BCCC, Office of Institutional Research and Planning; *2002 Data Book*, BCCC
- <sup>9</sup> *Trend Book March 2003*, Maryland Higher Education Commission
- <sup>10</sup> BCCC, Office of Institutional Research and Planning
- <sup>11</sup> (<http://www.bccc.edu>) MAT 80 Arithmetic: Concepts and Applications (0 credits); MAT 81 Elementary Algebra (0 credits); MAT 82 Intermediate Algebra (0 credits)
- <sup>12</sup> (<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)
- <sup>13</sup> (<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)
- <sup>14</sup> (Email) From: McKay, Sylvester E., Sent: Tuesday, November 04, 2003 12:08 PM, To: BCCC Community, Subject: SEC Questionnaire
- <sup>15</sup> *Trend Book March 2003*, Maryland Higher Education Commission
- <sup>16</sup> *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
- <sup>17</sup> Handout at BCCC Board of Trustees Meeting, March 21, 2002; *Baltimore City Community College Middle States Self-Study*, January 2003
- <sup>18</sup> *Baltimore City Community College Middle States Self-Study*, January 2003
- <sup>19</sup> (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
- <sup>20</sup> (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
- <sup>21</sup> Draft Proposal for a BCCC Developmental Studies Division—The BCCC Center for Learning Programs Division
- <sup>22</sup> BCCC Agenda Attachment, December 18, 2003; Confirmation of Personnel Actions, p. 3
- <sup>23</sup> BCCC 2003 Data Book; Baltimore City Community College Board of Trustees Retreat, April 15, 2004
- <sup>24</sup> Gaps for Fall 2003 represent data omitted due to higher percentages of incompletes
- <sup>25</sup> Gaps for Fall 2003 are due to the merger that semester of developmental reading with developmental English
- <sup>26</sup> “Statement of Concerns and Request for Intervention to the Board of Trustees of Baltimore City Community College,” The Faculty Senate, BCCC, October 3, 2003
- <sup>27</sup> *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
- <sup>28</sup> (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
- <sup>29</sup> Board of Trustees Open Session Agenda, February 19, 2004
- <sup>30</sup> *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

*This report: Baltimore City Community College: A Long Way To Go — Two Years Yield Few Meaningful Reforms; Underscore Deep-Seated Challenges Facing Baltimore City Residents’ Largest Provider of Post-Secondary Education is available in newsletter format on The Abell Foundation’s website at [www.abell.org](http://www.abell.org)*

## Abell Foundation Award in Urban Policy/ Johns Hopkins University Institute of Policy Studies

The award is given annually to the Johns Hopkins student who writes the most compelling paper on a pressing problem facing the City of Baltimore. The contest is open to all full-time students in any degree-granting program of Johns Hopkins University.

The following papers were selected for recognition by the Abell Award judging committee, which was comprised of opinion leaders from the private and public sectors and Johns Hopkins faculty:

**First Place: “Youth Violence Prevention and Reduction: Strategies for a Safer Baltimore,”** by Rachel Brash, MPP’04. This paper examines an issue that is of special concern to our city. While nationwide, youth violence rates have declined significantly over the last decade, in Baltimore these rates have remained high. This year’s winning paper examined a range of youth violence prevention options currently being employed in Baltimore and other cities and recommended a comprehensive approach to reduce Baltimore’s persistently high youth violence rates. The recommendations include: close coordination between police, parole officers, and other service providers for youth at highest risk of violence; regular home visitation by nurses and paraprofessionals to improve prenatal and early childhood care and reduce the chances of child abuse; school-based prevention programs; intensive family therapy; and targeted police patrols in areas with high rates of violence.

**Second Place: “The Impact of Zero Tolerance School Discipline Policies in Baltimore City”** by Brecht Donoghue, MPP’04. This paper takes a critical look at whether so-called “zero tolerance” discipline policies—which prescribe mandatory punishment for a host of student infractions—are reducing crime and violence in Baltimore’s schools. The paper argues, very persuasively, that these policies have not significantly improved safety in the schools, and that the high rates of student suspensions (often for relatively minor misconduct) resulting from these policies may have a negative effect on children’s educational progress. She argues for a more rigorous analysis of the impact of these policies in Baltimore schools, and recommends alternative disciplinary methods—including programmatic violence prevention efforts, adequate counseling staff and resources at all schools, peer mediation, and adopting a restorative justice model in which students must rectify their mistakes—to help achieve the stated goals of increasing school safety and improving student performance.

**Honorable Mention: “Baltimore City Infant Mortality: Leading Causes, Risk Factors, and Policy Solutions”** by Eric Ding, BA’04. This paper examines the roots of Baltimore’s troublingly high infant mortality rates, which were more than 70 percent higher than the national average in 2000. The paper looks at a range of causes, including short gestation and low birth weight, congenital malformations, infant respiratory distress, and sudden infant death syndrome and analyzes risk factors associated with these causes. Among the multiple policy remedies discussed are a citywide free crib subsidy for low-income mothers, mass awareness campaigns about behavioral risks targeted at low-income women, expansion of lead-housing relocation programs for pregnant mothers, and an indoor air filter subsidy program for mothers living in dilapidated housing.

**Honorable Mention: “Reducing Latina Teen Birth Rate in Baltimore City”** by public health doctoral candidate Tilly Gurman. While teen birth rates declined nationally during the 1990s, in Maryland, births among Latina teens rose 34 percent from 1991 to 1999. The paper explores the sociocultural, environmental, and individual factors that contribute to high Latina birth rates, and describes the consequences of this trend. Among other challenges, teen mothers are more likely than their counterparts who delay childbearing to end up on welfare, and their babies are more likely to be born prematurely and at low birth-weight than women who wait longer to have children. The paper argues for a multi-faceted intervention strategy that promotes prophylactic provision of emergency contraceptive pills to sexually active Latina teens.

This was the second year the award has been offered. The winning papers will be circulated to relevant policymakers and opinion leaders and posted on the IPS and Abell Foundation websites ([www.jhu.edu/ips](http://www.jhu.edu/ips) and [www.abell.org](http://www.abell.org)).

For more information, including guidelines for submissions, contact IPS Director Sandra Newman ([sjn@jhu.edu](mailto:sjn@jhu.edu) or 410-516-4614) or visit the IPS website ([www.jhu.edu/ips](http://www.jhu.edu/ips)).

## ABELL SALUTES: *Continued from page 1*

mission—day by day, student by student.

Through its recruiting and fund raising, BEST has provided support for the matriculation of 1,260 students into one of 23 private schools (mostly from one-parent households whose incomes average \$37,000). Of those students, 460 have graduated from, and some are currently attending, America’s most prestigious colleges and universities—including Princeton, Wellesley, Brown and Duke. In any given year there are about 450 BEST students in all of the schools throughout all of the grades.

One former BEST alumna is Crystal Lee, who became a BEST student at Garrison Forest when she was 13-years-old and after attending the eighth grade at John Paul Regional Catholic school in Woodlawn. “What surprised me about the change from John Paul to Garrison Forest,” she says, “was the increased work load – that hit me, it was significantly more. But it made my educational experience at Garrison. I loved the school—I got so wrapped up in sports I didn’t get home until six and six thirty every night! I graduated and went on to Loyola College of Baltimore and then was lucky enough to be hired here at Garrison Forest as Director of Alumnae Relations.”

Faderera Adesina was attending Baltimore City’s public Roland Park Middle school and found she had a mild reading disability, and so her family had her transferred to the Jemicy School. It was while she was attending Jemicy that her counselors brought her together with BEST and matriculation into, an eventual graduation from Oldfields. She says, “When I moved to Oldfields I found that the teachers’ expectations of me were high, and I had to work very hard to keep up.” Federera plans to attend Hobart-William Smith College, and to major in communications. Asked where her young life might have gone without the help and support of BEST, she says, “I have no clue. BEST has made all the difference.”

Enoch Attenoukon’s family resided on Woodland Avenue in the Park Heights Avenue / Pimlico section of Baltimore City, and when Enoch reached school age in 2002 he attended Edgemoor Circle Elementary. For middle school, his mother, then a teacher’s aide, entered him into St. Ignatius Academy on scholarship. “Everyone there was on scholarship,” he says. “Our teachers expected a lot of us and we all studied hard. When it came time to think about high school, the ninth grade, my teachers recommended me to BEST, and I was admitted into Gilman on a BEST scholarship.” Now in his senior year, he says, “I seem to have been well prepared for the academic work—but finding myself one of the few black students in a mostly all white school—that took some getting used to and some adjusting.” Enoch has apparently adjusted well: he played varsity football and ran varsity track and will be attending the University of Maryland. He says, “I owe BEST a lot.”

The Abell Foundation salutes BEST -- its staff and board under the leadership of board chair Theo C. Rodgers, for continuing to carry out the BEST mission -- increasing educational opportunities for disadvantaged Afro American students, and making a difference in their lives.